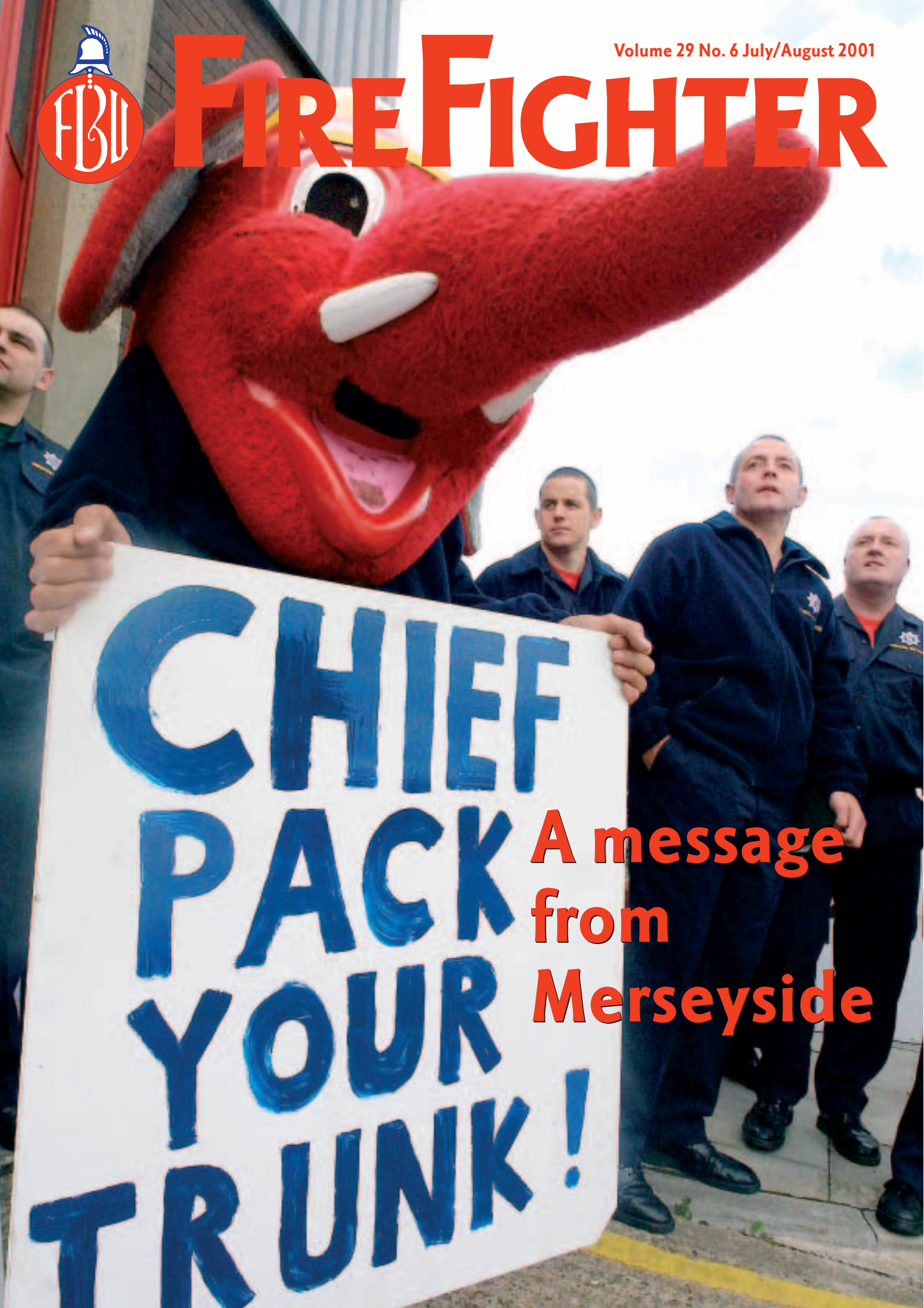




Volume 29 No. 6 July/August 2001

# FIRE FIGHTER



**A message  
from  
Merseyside**

## GENERAL SECRETARY

# 'SO WHAT'S THE MERSEYSIDE

THE long struggle to maintain our Pay Formula and our Grey Book through the 'Smash & Grab campaign', resulted in maintaining both and achieving a formula to ensure peace in the Service for the future: the 'Burchill Report'.

The Employers and the Fire Brigades Union agreed the terms of Professor Frank Burchill's report. Both sides agreed on his set of proposals, which offered a way forward when differences occurred.

Fundamental to that process was the acceptance of both sides that the decision of the National Joint Council Disputes Panel was binding. The Panel, composed of three Employers and three Fire Brigades Union Executive Council members, is Chaired by an agreed Independent Chair.

Crucially, both parties had to agree at the outset to abide by the decision of the panel; whatever the outcome.

One key aspect of that process was to accept an Independent Chair for the NJC Disputes Panel. In the past, the Chair had alternated between Employer and Employee each year and it was believed – rightly or wrongly – that this could be seen as being biased.

Since that agreement, the process has worked remarkably well, proving that there is indeed a willingness on all sides to make the process work ... until now.

The current dispute ostensibly centres around the Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority's decision that they would employ non-uniformed, operational Officers, who did not require any operational experience, but who would have the requisite managerial skills. The Merseyside FBU Officials thought that this was the worst in a series of increasingly bizarre experiments carried out in the Brigade. They stated their outright objection to the proposals, but were told that they would go ahead regardless. The Officials then registered two associated disputes on this matter, which eventually found their way to the NJC Disputes Panel.

The Panel met, the arguments from both sides were put and on both disputes the Panel voted 6 to 0 in favour of the Union's position. This of course meant that not only did the Union side on the Panel vote against the proposals, but the Employers also voted them out.

Our Officials came away thinking that a good day's work had



ANDREW WIARD/REPORTPHOTOS.COM

been done and returned to Merseyside.

However, it now becomes clear that the Politicians and Senior Managers on Merseyside were having none of this. The very next day, 4 May, in a cynical and underhand way, the Corporate Management team decided that those successful would not, if non-uniformed, be placed on Grey Book conditions!

All arguments were brushed aside as the Authority re-interpreted the decision of the Disputes Panel and carried on with their plans.

Having procedurally tried everything in their power to stop the process and with the Brigade carrying on regardless, the members demanded industrial action as a last resort to halt the process.

A ballot was organised and a letter sent to the Authority laying out the terms of the trade dispute. As repeated many times the resolution to this dispute lies within the following four undertakings:

1. In relation to all disputes registered under national conditions

Cover picture: Andrew Wiard/Reportphotos.com



# FIREFIGHTER

Volume 29 No. 6 July/August 2001

Published by The Fire Brigades Union  
Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road,  
Kingston Upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE  
Design: edition.co.uk  
Print: Folium Print,  
5-8 Caroline Street, Birmingham B3 1TR



# STRIKE GOT TO DO WITH ME?'

of service to fully and immediately comply with status quo as specifically required by national conditions of service, not as re-interpreted by CFO Saunders and/or the Authority. In particular to ensure that no steps whatsoever are taken by the Fire Authority to implement the decision under dispute.

**2.** In relation to all disputes determined by the NJC Disputes Committee under national conditions of service to fully and immediately comply with the decision reached.

**3.** To formally accept that the decision of the Corporate Management Team of the Authority including CFO Saunders is outside and in breach of national conditions of service. To immediately and unequivocally condemn and repudiate that decision and the conduct of the Corporate Management Team including CFO Saunders in blatantly disregarding the unanimous decision of the NJC Disputes Committee.

And

**4.** To immediately comply in full with the decision of the NJC Disputes Committee on 3 May 2001 and forthwith discontinue the assessment and processing of the applications from non-uniformed personnel.

In short, to settle the dispute, the Authority were required by the Union to abide by the decision of the Disputes Panel and abandon their project ... they refused.

However, they did attempt to find a way around the dispute by offering a form of words which they had hoped would see the dispute called off. As the offer would still have allowed them to recruit for the contended posts, not unsurprisingly, the members rejected the offer.

Merseyside then sought an injunction, in which they attempted to argue that they had fulfilled the terms of the trade dispute.

In a hearing at the High Court, spread over three days, we were treated to a set of bizarre arguments, culminating in the Authority finally withdrawing their application with costs awarded against them. The total cost of this farce is an estimated £60,000 – £70,000.

"Yes, but what's the Merseyside strike got to do with me?"

Well, the entire basis of the national agreement reached after the Smash & Grab campaign now hangs in the balance.

## If Merseyside are allowed to flout a national agreement, then we have no national agreement

The NJC Disputes Panel was invested with supreme authority in a genuine attempt to ensure that both sides could have their argument fairly heard with a decision reached which would be respected by all.

If the Panel's decisions can be so easily swept aside, then what exactly is the authority of the National Joint Council itself?

We believe that this entire dispute has been manufactured by an Authority which argued strongly against the Burchill Report when it was published. It is now abundantly clear that the motivation for this dispute is to wreck the entire peace process hammered out after the Smash & Grab campaign.

If Merseyside are allowed to flout the authority of the NJC whenever it pleases them, then we are right back to where we were three years ago.

The formula for peace was hard won and both sides stepped back from the brink of a national strike and jointly signed up to a way forward. Neither side got everything it wanted and there were compromises made all round. But the process was beginning to work; to bear fruit.

We are in grave danger therefore, of being hauled back into a conflict, to once again defend national bargaining.

Make no mistake; if Merseyside are allowed to flout a national agreement, then we have no national agreement.

**SUPPORT THE BURCHILL FORMULA**  
**SUPPORT NATIONAL BARGAINING**  
**SUPPORT MERSEYSIDE**



**FBU CONFIDENTIAL FREEPHONE HELPLINE**

**0 8 0 0 7 8 3 4 7 7 8**

**FAIRNESS AT WORK is about treating others as we would wish to be treated ourselves – with respect**

## THE FBU AND THE LABOUR PARTY

# Conference has given the Executive quite a challenge

**Andy Gilchrist**  
General Secretary

THE Union's relationship with the Labour Party was once again a matter of debate at Annual Conference. It is true to say that ever since the Union affiliated to the Party at national level back in the 1920s, the relationship has had its ups and downs. This should come as no great surprise since Governments and Local Authorities, directly and indirectly, determine our wages and Conditions of Service. So, unlike our sister and brother Trade Unionists in the private sector, besides being affiliates, we are often also on the other side of the bargaining table from Labour politicians. It is a dual relationship and sometimes one aspect comes into conflict with the other.

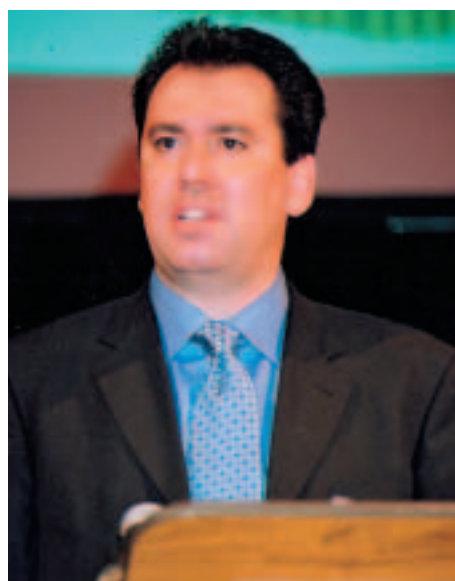
Some readers may ask why the Union puts itself in this position – why members overwhelmingly support the concept of an FBU Political Fund and why most pay into it. In essence the answer is not difficult to find. Politics is the way society has found to regulate economic and social change. If they want a collective voice, on behalf of their members, to influence the political system then Trade Unions need to develop a Political Fund. This is summed up in the Rule Book as follows:

“The Fire Brigades Union recognises that workers, however employed, can only improve their lot by their own endeavours and organisation. A richer and fuller life can be achieved only by similar means.

To this end the Fire Brigades Union is part of the working-class movement and, linking itself with the international Trade Union and labour Movement, has as its ultimate aim the bringing about of the Socialist system of society.”

Neither is it surprising that the Fund is used to support the activities of the Labour Party and the costs of FBU involvement in the Labour Party as well as many other political activities. For this is how the other TUC affiliate also use their Political Funds. This ensures that there is a collective Trade Union voice and this is recognised in the Constitution and practices of the Labour Party. Here the history is interesting and important. It was after all the Trade Unions which formed the Labour Party at the beginning of the last century to provide a Parliamentary voice for Trade Unionists.

Of British political parties, whether of the right or left, the Labour Party is unique in its federal structure. This provides a democratic mechanism for Trade Union views and priorities to be



**Andy Gilchrist:**  
*We need to protect all that's good in the current arrangements to remain within the mainstream of labour Movement politics, while campaigning against many of the wrong-headed anti-Union policies of New Labour*

expressed within a mass Party, which regularly contests and wins elections at European, national and local levels.

If unified and determined the Trade Unions can still exert considerable influence within the Labour Party. In this sense the Trade Unions still have rights and constitutionally it is correct to see the Labour Party as “our Party”.

This is not to deny that there are problems resulting mainly from recent developments within New Labour. There can be no doubt that the Trade Union role in the Party, has been changed and in important ways downgraded. And yet the essentials remain – it is still possible for the FBU to have a direct input into policy formation and the choice of candidates at Parliamentary and Local Government levels. Again it is still “our Party” even if it sometimes appears that those at the top do not give adequate recognition and respect to the democratic value of the Party.

The frustrations created by New Labour are widely felt and found full expression at this year's FBU Conference. As a result of Conference decision, the Executive Council will be looking at the use made of the Political Fund and bringing back recommendations and Rule changes to Annual Conference 2002. There is no denying that the Conference decision in favour of supporting candidates other than those of the Labour Party, where such candidates are seen to better represent FBU policies, presents a number of problems. Firstly, these candidates will not be

**CONTINUED NEXT PAGE**

## STAR WARS 2001

A delegate to this year's Conference informs us that an emergency resolution entitled "Star Wars; the National Defence System" was moved by London, seconded by Luke Skywalker and supported by R2D2 and Han Solo. Apparently the Resolution was passed and the film was quite good as well.

## THE RF WHO?

Which organisation that doesn't have a seat on the NJC turned up at a recent Scottish Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council (SCFBAC) to present a paper on "Modernising the Retained Fire Service in Scotland"?

Which organisation that only has one seat on the SCFBAC turned up with two delegates?

The members of the Council other than this mystery organisation agreed that they should only be allowed one speaker ... step up Mr. Chadbon.

When Mr. Chadbon started his contribution, the Council was informed that as this paper contained matters on Pay and Conditions of Service it could not properly be raised at the SCFBAC. Surely Mr. Chadbon should have known this? Anyway, the Council agreed and the paper was removed from the agenda.

The Council agreed that, as Pay and Conditions were involved, this matter should be raised at the NJC. Mr. Chadbon agreed this too. But Mr. Chadbon comes from an organisation that does not have a seat on the NJC. Surely he should have known this too?

So, their paper on the future of Retained Firefighters looks as if it will be sent to the NJC and they can't speak to it, as they don't have a seat on the NJC.

The next item on the agenda was HMI's paper on the Retained in Scotland. The FBU made several comments on this paper and Mr. Chadbon said that he echoed our remarks. Think about it. ... he'd travelled all the way to

Scotland so he had to say something so he echoed what the FBU said. A true representative of the Retained.

Oh yes, Mr. Chadbon's mystery organisation – why the Really Failing Union of course.

## BLAIR'S 40% PAY RISE

Tony Blair is receiving a £47,079 pay rise. The Prime Ministers and Cabinet ministers will be taking their full salary for the first time. The Prime Minister, who previously took £116,339, will now be paid £163,418 a year – a 40.5% rise. Members of the Cabinet, who were previously paid £99,793 including their MP's salary, will now receive £117,979 – an 18.2% rise.

The pay of Cabinet members in the House of Lords will go up from £74,911 to £88,562 a year, also a rise of 18.2%.

Perhaps we should change the Pay Formula to link our earnings to that of MPs.

## PFI NOT WORKING

An example of the effect of the efficiency of the private sector being introduced into public services, about which New Labour are so enthusiastic, was provided in the London Fire Brigade on 1 July.

The last day of June fell on a Saturday. The following day 12 fire appliances were found to have expired tax discs and had to be taken off the run.

Despite London firefighters no longer being required to move fire appliances in order to release spares, as part of the Private Finance Initiative Deal introduced on 14 February, firefighters were sent all over the Capital in order to find spares that had current tax discs.

Another good PFI deal!!



Write to THE FIFTH COLUMN, c/o The Editor, The Firefighter, Fire Brigades Union, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, KT2 7AE

members of a Party of which the FBU is a member through affiliation. In other words they will be outside of the democratic loop as far as the FBU is concerned. They will be members of organisations, which the FBU cannot directly influence. And in most conceivable situations such candidates will not be challenging to win elections – all the evidence suggests that electorally small fringe, "left of Labour" Party's are remarkably unsuccessful. e.g. the last Communist MP was elected in 1945. So even if FBU sponsored, such candidates will not be in a position to influence or make Government or Local Authority policies. Clearly mechanisms need also to be in place to ensure no Party as politically as offensive as the Tories or worse is able to solicit and gain support.

Conference has given the Executive Council quite a challenge. We need to protect all that's good in the current arrangements to remain within the mainstream of Labour Movement politics, while campaigning against many of the wrong-headed anti-Union policies of New Labour. One thing is constant – the need to campaign and redouble our efforts in support of FBU policies both within the Labour Movement and more widely in the communities which we serve.

And we should always remember that the organised Labour Movement remains our strongest weapon as we strive to win better conditions at work as well as working to end poverty, unemployment, exploitation and oppression in society as a whole.

## CORPORATE MANSLAUGHTER

# Employers beware: corporate killing will be prosecuted

**Mike Appleby**  
Co-ordinator,  
Thompsons Health and  
Safety Department



THOMPSONS  
SOLICITORS

### BACKGROUND

THE prosecution of P&O Ferries following the capsizing of the Herald of Free Enterprise Ferry in 1987 when 192 people died, confirmed a company could be charged with corporate manslaughter. However, the case was thrown out by the Trial Judge who ruled that the prosecution could not satisfy the "doctrine of identification". This is the principle of showing that the actions or omissions of someone in a senior position are legally recognised as being those of the company i.e. identifying the "directing mind".

There have only been a few "successful" corporate manslaughter cases, all against small companies where there were only a few directors and the task of identifying the "directing mind" was relatively easy. But there have been a number of high profile disasters that have occurred where there have been neither corporate manslaughter charges nor manslaughter charges against senior people within the company.

After the Piper Alpha disaster, Lord Cullen found that Occidental Petroleum had "significant flaws in the quality of [its] management of safety". In the Inquiry into the Clapham Junction train crash Mr Justice Hidden QC criticised British Rail for letting its working practices "slip to unacceptable and dangerous



standards". Mr Justice Fennell QC in his Inquiry into the Kings Cross fire criticised London Underground for "collective failure from the most senior management level downward over many years to minimise the outbreak of fire".

Following the Southall train crash, Great Western Trains (GWT) were charged with corporate manslaughter. In this case, GWT's train was travelling with its automatic warning system (AWS) inoperative, when the train passed a red light colliding with a goods train. The AWS was designed to help drivers from passing red signals and gives an auditory warning in the cab if there is a cautionary signal. No one on the Board of Directors of GWT was charged with manslaughter. The Trial Judge dismissed the charges because the prosecution had not identified the "directing mind". In his judgement this was the only way of proving corporate manslaughter.

GWT pleaded guilty to a health and safety offence and were fined a record £1.5 million. The Judge stated that GWT had failed to meet the required standard of care of its passengers and this failure was a significant cause of the crash.

Following the collapse of the Southall case, there were calls for a change in the law. Last year pressure increased upon the Government shortly before the start of Lord Cullen's Inquiry into the Ladbroke Grove crash when an announcement was made that no one would be prosecuted for manslaughter. Lord Cullen's report into this incident is expected shortly.

### GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS

In May 2000 the Government published proposals for a new offence of 'corporate killing' in a bid to make negligent companies and individuals more accountable for health and





**Southall – £1.5 million fine, but no one prosecuted for manslaughter**

safety failures that result in death. According to the Government, organisations involved in some of the biggest disasters in recent times have escaped prosecution for corporate manslaughter because of current “loop holes” in criminal law.

The new law aims to ensure that companies face prosecution for management failures resulting in a person's death. Under the proposals a company could be charged with corporate killing if the management failure had meant the conduct of the business in causing the death fell “far below what could reasonably be expected”. The offence would carry an unlimited fine and a remedial order to correct the cause of an accident, whilst company directors could also face disqualification.

The Government is also suggesting three new offences which are designed to make individuals in an organisation personally accountable. The one that is most relevant to workplace fatalities is the proposed offence of ‘killing by gross carelessness’, which could carry a maximum penalty of 10 years.

A joint submission by the FBU, ASLEF and Thompsons was made to the Government in response to the proposals broadly welcoming them. The following observations were made:

- **The proposals did not go far enough to establish corporate and management responsibility for workplace fatalities.** The Submission proposes that there should be criminal liability for Managing Directors and their equivalent where a management failure has caused a fatality. The submission points out that the FBU has “*taken the lead in stressing employers’ responsibilities for workplace fatalities in the Fire Service. Where such fatalities have occurred, Brigades have invariably accepted responsibility for the accident by paying civil compensation when faced with allegations of negligence. And yet, criminal prosecutions have never been brought where there is clear evidence of gross negligence*”.
- **The practice of scapegoating front line workers or relatively junior managers is unacceptable.** The submission points to the examples of the Watford and Southall train crashes where the drivers were charged with manslaughter and acquitted. Subsequent reports into the disasters found that management failures were the root causes of the incidents. The Submission argues that where there is a

management failure this should be a defence to any criminal proceedings brought against a frontline worker.

- **Workplace fatalities are avoidable.** The inability to prosecute culpable directors following major disasters and individual fatal accidents is scandalous. The attempts to scapegoat individual employees, such as train drivers, have been widely condemned. The failure to secure convictions against such employees demonstrates the strength of the jury system and the overwhelming public opinion that **criminal liability for such incidents rest properly with owners, directors and very senior personnel.**

Since 1999 the FBU have adopted a clear policy that following any workplace fatality, all possible legal steps will be taken to ensure that manslaughter prosecutions are pursued in appropriate cases. Sadly, this policy has already had to be invoked.

In 1999 Paul Metcalf lost his life when attempting a water rescue in a small lake. At the inquest last year the FBU drew to the Coroner's attention management failures which it believed had occurred. The jury did not accept that this was an accident by returning an open verdict rather than a finding of accidental death. The Coroner recommended that the file be referred to the police to investigate criminal responsibility. At the present time a decision is awaited.

In addition to the corporate killing proposals, the Government and the HSC issued a blueprint for safety entitled *Revitalising Health and Safety*. This sets out a 44-point action plan that includes practical measures to help organisations raise standards and a range of policies to tackle employers who do not meet their health and safety responsibilities (including higher fines for health and safety offences).

Whatever the future of the corporate killing legislation, it is clear that attitudes to workplace deaths are changing. The likely consequence of this is that employers can expect greater scrutiny of their safety procedures when things go wrong with a greater possibility of a resulting criminal prosecution. Given the clear commitment and determination of the FBU and Dave Patton in particular, fire authorities, Chief Fire Officers and principal officers have every incentive to modernise health and safety in the Fire Service or face the consequences.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY: RIDDOR REPORTING

# New arrangements for reporting incidents

NEW arrangements for the reporting of incidents under the Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR) came into force on 1 April 2001. From this date incidents can be reported directly to the HSE's new Incident Contact Centre at Caerphilly.

Postal reports should be sent to: Incident Contact Centre, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly, CF83 3GG. Internet reports can be filed at website [www.riddor.gov.uk](http://www.riddor.gov.uk) E-mail reports can be made via [riddor@natbrit.com](mailto:riddor@natbrit.com). Telephone reports should be made on: 0845 300 9923 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.00pm only). Fax reports should be made on: 0845 300 9924. Both of these numbers are charged at local call rates. Reports can also still be made via local HSE offices.

*Incidents  
can be  
reported  
directly via  
the Health  
and Safety  
Executive's  
RIDDOR  
website*



## REPEAL OF SAFETY REPS REGULATIONS

The HSE has confirmed that it is working on the first part of a two-part package to repeal the Safety Committees and Safety Representatives Regulations 1977 and the Health and Safety Consultation with Employees Regulations 1996. This follows more than 800 replies to the recent consultation process. The first part of the package involves the publication of a further consultative document proposing to replace both sets of Regulations with harmonised consultation arrangements based on the 1977 Regulations.

The new Regulations would also:

- Enable employees in workplaces without recognition to decide whether they wish to be consulted directly or via elected representatives (currently the employer makes this choice).

- Specify the roles and functions of elected representatives, which are likely to be more extensive than at present.

The new Regulations would be supported by an Approved Code of Practice and Guidance. It is also proposed to test further "workers" safety advisers' pilot schemes in workplaces where there is currently little or no employee representation and safety records are poor and to carry out further research into links between effective employee consultation and the health and safety performance of the organisation.

The second part of the package will involve a publicity campaign for the new legislation as well as some enforcement initiatives and training for HSE Inspectors.

**Croner Health & Safety Training Resource  
March 2001**

## PENSIONS

# Pension increase (review) order 2001

THE Pensions Increase (Review) Order 2001 provides for public service pensions beginning before 10 April 2000 to be increased on 9 April 2001 by 3.3%.

The increase on the same date for pensions beginning between 10 April 2000 and 8 April 2001 will depend on the number of completed months between the beginning date of the pension and 8 April 2001.

In accordance with the provisions of Rule E9 of the Firemen's Pension Scheme Order 1992, widows' flat-rate pensions and

children's flat-rate allowances are increased directly by orders made under Section 59 of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975, as amended.

These awards will accordingly be increased by 3.3% from 9 April 2001.

A copy of the full draft Statutory Instrument is held by FBU Brigade and Regional Secretaries.

**DAVE PATTON  
National Officer**



## MATERNITY POLICY

# Avon: a heroic and historic decision



**William Hendy**  
Brigade Secretary  
Avon FBU

IN EARLY summer 2000, the Fire Brigades Union, as a member of the Equality and Fairness committee of Avon Fire Brigade, agreed to take part in a joint working Party set up to look at proposals for a Brigade maternity policy. At the outset, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Dave Hutchings assured us that Brigade Management wanted a policy to rival any in the country.

The working Party was designed to be as diverse as possible and included female firefighters, retained firefighters, the Equality and Fairness Unit, Human Resources, the Health and Safety Committee, Brigade Management and of course the FBU. At the end of the process we had a policy which included many of the "family friendly policies" we had been encouraging for some time, as well as the improvements in legislation which had taken place in recent years. However, the FBU were still concerned that 18 weeks maternity pay did not allow women the opportunity to fully recover from the birth of a child, particularly if the birth was difficult or late.

When the working Party presented its proposals to the Equality and Fairness Forum (which includes three elected members, one from each political Party on the Combined Authority) on 3 November 2000, the FBU proposed an increase in paid maternity leave from 18 weeks to 24 weeks. This would, we suggested, allow women the opportunity to regain a level of fitness suitable for a return to duty, in safety.

There was some debate around the issue but it was agreed that the Chair (DCO. Hutchings) would put a paper to the next fire authority meeting to be held on the 15 December 2000.

Avon combined fire authority had almost in isolation, refused to support the abolition of National Conditions of Service and made a stance to maintain Grey Book conditions, often under intense pressure from other Authorities and Organisations. Understandably they were reluctant to agree a policy, which may

have compromised this position and although they supported the principle they resolved to take up the matter as a national issue, through the LGA rather than at local level.

We raised the issue again at the next Equality and Fairness Forum, which took place on Friday 23 February and supported by the elected members, it was agreed that the issue be returned to the full authority for consideration. Unfortunately after seeking advice from the Equal Opportunities Task Group, the authority reaffirmed its support for a national policy rather than enter into local agreement, but agreed to continue to press the Home office and the LGA for an improvement.

Somehow the logjam had to be broken and it was April 19 2001, that the General Secretary, Andy Gilchrist wrote to the Chief Officer and thanked him for his support and reminded him that there were many instances of Brigades, after negotiation with FBU officials, improving upon the conditions contained in the Grey Book. With two days to go before the next fire authority meeting in May, we were able to speak to Geoff Ellis who fortunately, was attending a two-day meeting of the Equal Opportunities Task Group and he spoke to both the Chair and the Secretary of that Group and they indicated that they would not object to a local improvement in maternity leave. This new information was conveyed to the authority via the Chief and at a meeting on Friday 25 May, the authority agreed to the introduction of a local agreement on maternity pay that gives female firefighters in Avon, 24 weeks paid maternity leave. A decision both historic and heroic and one that does credit to the authority, Brigade Management and the Brigade Committee who supported our female firefighters' cause.

Can I mention one or two other people without whose support we would not have achieved this result?

Firstly the Chair of the authority, Councillor Terry Walker who has never been afraid to stand up and be counted.

Avon fire authority and the leaders of the political parties who leave Party politics at the door in defence of the service.

The Chief Officer of Avon, Dave Hutchings, who has championed equality tirelessly for years and who even now, retains his FBU membership and his Deputy Kevin Pearson who is committed to taking Avon forward with equality.

And finally to Sister Hill and my Brigade Committee who have consistently supported the principles of equality.

To them all, a big thank you!

## REGION 10 WOMEN'S SCHOOL

# Time well spent

**Sally Tyrrell**  
**Women's Rep Suffolk FBU**

I ATTENDED the Regional School in Ipswich with the view to learning more about the Union and to meet and discuss ideas with other women in the Fire Service. It's always good to meet new people and to discover that the experiences you encounter are no different to others.

Things kicked off informally on Sunday, with meeting and greeting, finding out where people were from and their involvement in the Fire Service. Both Control and operational Firefighters were represented.

On Monday, we started by discussing why some men and women do not like to get involved in the Union. Some reasons appear to be the same, e.g. apathy, concern about voicing an opinion that would be shouted down, but there were other issues that related more to women.

Women often feel isolated on their stations, they do not like being singled out. Also, some men perceive women's groups as having either a feminist stance, or as just a platform to discuss "women's things". We all agreed that women do not want to be labelled in this way and as a result, some women prefer not to stick their head above the parapet. Most of this is quite simply a lack of understanding by both men and women.

The rest of this day was a little, dare I say it, dry, but was totally necessary in order to tie things up. We discussed the processes, structure and responsibilities of the Union and how it fitted into

**REGION 10 WOMEN'S SCHOOL**  
**1-3 April 2001**  
**Held at Belstead House, Ipswich**

our workplace. At the end of the day I had a better understanding of the Union and the part that I can directly play in that process.

To take away a little of the dryness of the day, a social event was arranged for the evening. Ipswich is not exactly a metropolis and having decided the company in Brannigans was a little undesirable, we found our own little niche in the neighbouring club and strutted our funky stuff 'til the small hours. This also had the effect of allowing other issues to be discussed in a more informal atmosphere – so much more seems to be discussed at these times.

Our second day started with a recap on the process of the Union and touching on the new FBU publication of "All Different All Equal", generally agreed as an excellent publication by all aspects of the workplace.

We then considered a number of case studies in smaller groups and discussed how problems arise and what we can all do, not just as Union representatives, but also as individuals. These were well presented and produced some interesting discussion. At the very least, we all have a responsibility to respect each other; it would make our workplaces far better places.

We rounded up by collecting information about how we could improve things for our women members, extending our network and how to encourage women to take an active part in the Union. The input was positive, constructive and produced achievable goals. Members would like to make earlier contact with others locally, before they go to training school, to start up

the support networks. It was thought that as a Region, we should seek to welcome new members and provide all the information that they need, such as contact points and the aims of Region 10 with regard to Union membership and support networks.

Being pro-Union but pessimistic about women getting together – I thought I would become more singled

out, but I was encouraged by the value of the school. I learned a great deal, not only about the Union process and my role in that process, but I also gained from the informal networking that took place. I'm sure I voice the opinion of all those that attended; it was time well spent.

I would like to thank Graham Tranquada and particularly Kerry Baigent, for all the hard work that went into organising the school. An informative and social success!

**I learned a great deal,  
not only about the Union  
process and my role in  
that process, but I also  
gained from the  
informal networking**

## 2001 SCANDINAVIAN STUDY DAYS

# Following Lenin's footsteps in Helsinki

**John Nelson**  
National Retained Committee

THIS year was obviously going to be a very busy and interesting year for me. I have Retained Committee meetings to attend in London (six this year), I had a Conference to attend in May as a National Retained Committee representative for the first time and I had the Scandinavian Study Days in Helsinki to attend. Also, as a National Retained Committee member and still to come at Wortley in November, is the Retained AGM. Not bad for a bus driver trying to juggle shifts for time off.

Having been told that the National Retained Committee will expect a full report at our June meeting, here goes!

On the Sunday morning I met up with Jim Barbour, No. 2 Region Executive Council member, at Belfast International Airport and we boarded a plane for Brussels. On landing in Brussels, we had approximately 30 minutes to make our connection for Helsinki and meet up with Roddy Robertson, Region 1 Chair. We made it with about two minutes to spare and practically ran straight on to the second aircraft.

On our arrival in Helsinki, Paavo, a Senior Divisional Officer from one of Helsinki's biggest stations met us. Over the next few days Paavo would look after the United Kingdom delegation who were all arriving at various times and from various places across the UK.

Monday morning – the Conference: This was to take place in a large building just across the road from our hotel, but getting to it was an experience.

You had to cross a traffic lane first, then two tram lines, then another traffic lane and wonder whether you had the right of way on a zebra crossing or the cars did. Great!

Once you got across this lot, you then had to dodge the mad cyclists who had their lane on the footpath and dear help you if you walked in this!

The Conference hall itself was a massive hall, but only about a quarter full, even when all the delegates were present. There were delegations present from Finland (hosts), Stockholm (Sweden), Gothenburg (Sweden), Norway (Bergen), Norway (Oslo),

Denmark, Iceland, Faeroe Islands, Great Britain, Spain and Poland. Some groups brought their own interpreters and we had Tiisa interpreting for us.

The opening ceremonies then took place, interspersed with music from the Helsinki Fire Brigade Band. After lunch followed reports of the participating countries and this was the only time any of us got to speak over the next four days. We listened attentively to talks on:

- European strikes and secondary picketing.
- Underground buildings in Helsinki – the vision of the planning office on underground building in Helsinki, including plans for a bus station, shops etc, underground.
- Tekla-ventilation controls in tunnels.
- Helsinki Rescue Service actions in Metro tunnels.
- National and international radio communications in the rescue services. Sales pitch by Nokia.
- Firefighter physical activities – extreme workload using breathing apparatus and chemical suits.

**After lunch followed reports of the participating countries and this was the only time any of us got to speak over the next four days**

- Safety at the shipyards.
- First response in Helsinki – the organisation mission, vision and values.
- The management system, process technique and operative function.
- Firefighter career planning i.e. Firefighter medical, rescue or scuba diving.
- Defibrillation equipment from the makers.

On Tuesday afternoon we attended a Civic Reception in the old Town Hall, hosted by Eva-Riitta Siitonen, the Lady Mayoress. Jim Barbour and myself presented her with the coats of arms from Belfast and

Newtownabbey and our interpreter said she was most impressed.

Wednesday was nearly all speeches, followed by a trip in the afternoon to the Masa shipyard. There we had a tour around a cruise ship under construction, looking at the problems faced by firefighters if the ship went on fire.

Afterwards we went over to the display given by the rescue department. It only lasted for about ten minutes, but it showed off their two rescue boats and their machines, which carried the scuba gear etc, (on a fire engine).

After the shipyard and the rescue, we were taken on a bus tour of Helsinki.



## 2001 SCANDINAVIAN STUDY DAYS

Wednesday evening our interpreter had been asked to book us a table at a restaurant. So, together with the Spanish delegation and the Polish delegation, we tramped off to the Marco Polo, a rather nice eating establishment, overlooking a bay, a part of the Baltic Sea. There we tried reindeer and I tried beef of bear soup. Well!!! When in Rome. As it was, both were very good. After the meal the Spanish delegate brought out a bottle of Spanish Brandy (paint thinners) and we all toasted one another. The Spanish and Polish delegations only had one delegate in each.

On the way out we sat at Lenin's revolution table as it was called, because when he lived in Helsinki in exile, he used the Marco Polo restaurant as his base.

On Thursday morning as Roddy and I were heading into the hall, Paavo waylaid us and took us to his station instead. When I say station, it was unlike anything we have in this country. With around 30 bays, 18 appliances and four or five ambulance appliances, it was massive. Below ground it had an Olympic sized swimming pool down to a depth of 6.5 metres, two saunas, an indoor gym for football and volleyball etc and two fitness suites and all this for only 8-10 crew.

This is because they jump-crew appliances as and when required. The Control Room for the station is also deep underground and their storeroom in which they also house international rescue equipment, is like Fort Knox.

Paavo proceeded to his part of the store and there Roddy and I were kitted out with genuine Helsinki issue polo shirts.

We learnt more about Helsinki and its firefighters/rescuers /smoke divers/paramedics etc, talking to Paavo for an hour than we did the rest of the time.

Finland itself is made up of 68% forest, 10% water and 6% farmland and includes 188,000 lakes and 179,000 islands. In winter the entire country is snow covered, with temperatures between -25°C and -40°C, but in summer it can reach 30°C.

The Finnish Brigades are in municipalities throughout Finland. The 60 largest have a Wholetime Brigade, whilst in 190 there is a Retained crew and around 200 volunteers crew the pumps.

They have around 4,800 Wholetime and 4,300 Retained in the whole of Finland, with around 11,000 volunteers.

For international rescue operations the FRF (Finnish Rescue Force) has three rescue companies totalling 196 rescuers. These crews are called up when necessary from the fire departments of the largest municipalities and assembled into suitable groups.

Finnish Brigades deal with approximately 12,000 fires each year; 1,600 house fires; 3,000 forest fires and various others. What amazed me was the amount of patient transportations each year, just over 200,000 as opposed to 50,000 emergency calls. It makes you wonder what service they are providing the best.

On the last afternoon, a firefighter's career planning officer spoke on the same thing and basically she said that money will decide these issues.

She also questioned the diversity of skills and how far along each route they should go i.e. should they be operational or planning or diving or rescue or medical? They are so mixed up that even the firefighters are asking for their job description and what they should and should not do.

After lunch followed the closing ceremony and the handing over of the Study Days flag to Oslo, who are going to host next year's Study Days. It was a bit like the Olympic ceremony and very formal.

Although this was the Study Days officially closed, we still had to get dressed up for the festive banquet and nomination of the Honorary Members that evening. At 6.30 pm, we were picked up by bus and transported to the Maestro restaurant where we had a nice meal and yet again more speeches.

Anyway, that was the gist of the Scandinavian Study Days. *The 2001 Scandinavian Study Days UK delegation was: Dave Green, Brian Joyce, Jim Barbour, Roddy Robertson, Chris Wood, Steve Benney, Pat Carberry, Vicky Knight and John Nelson (Author & Scribe).*

**They are so mixed up that even the firefighters are asking for their job description and what they should and should not do**

[www.tribuneuk.co.uk](http://www.tribuneuk.co.uk)



**Left at  
Number  
Ten**

**TRIBUNE**

Every week, TRIBUNE carries all the news and views from Labour and the Left. TRIBUNE is essential reading for all those keen to keep up with events inside New Labour, the Government and the unions and in touch with campaigns on key issues.

Fill in the form below to subscribe to TRIBUNE at the special three-month introductory rate of £10, saving 40 per cent on the normal price.

YES! I would like to subscribe to TRIBUNE for three months under your SPECIAL OFFER. I enclose a cheque/postal order for £10 to make payment for my three months subscription. All the prices are in pounds.

Name

Address

Postcode

Send the Subscription Offer, Tribune, FREEPOST WC503D, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW5 1YH (no stamp required).

## LETTERS

## BOTH SIDES OF THE ARGUMENT

Dear Firefighter,

If this, or any magazine, is to enjoy any degree of credibility, it should publish both sides of an argument and if the cause is just, let their readers make up their own minds.

I refer to the issue of Palestine. Israel is a very small country, about the size of Wales, with a total population about three quarters of that of Greater London. Roughly 20% of the population is Arab and under Israeli law are equal in every way, including one person one vote, with no one person's vote having anymore weight than another's. In short the same as here, but virtually unknown in any of the surrounding Arab countries. Israel's Arab population would translate to about 12,000,000 what are politely called "Ethnics" over here. And yes, there is unfortunately, a certain

amount of discrimination, but no worse and in most cases not as bad as in this country. As I write, how many black firefighters are there, or for that matter black policemen?

Under the 1999 Peace Agreement, Israel agreed to withdraw from 90% of Palestinian territory in return for a lasting peace. What they got was a never-ending stream of hate pouring daily from Palestinian radio, suicide bombers, shelling of Israeli settlement and murder of Israeli citizens. What do you expect them to do? What would the Government of this country do?

Yes, there is terrible poverty in Palestine. There are also beautiful grand mansions, owned by leaders of the Palestinian Authority. So where is the huge sums of money donated by oil rich Arabs going? Obviously not to those who really need it.

Most Israeli's and indeed most Palestinians, would prefer to live in peace and with a change in attitudes of the leadership of BOTH sides, this may one day be possible.

**Paul Kleinman**  
OOT Member

## CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION AWARD

THIS FBU member was a Firefighter who witnessed a horrific incident on 28 May 1994 when he had to attend to two women who had been deliberately set on fire having been soaked in petrol. He helped to extinguish the fire and then helped to comfort one of the victims. Tragically, the two victims died within a few hours of the incident and another injured man died within a day or two. It transpired that the person responsible for the assault had thrown a bucket of petrol over the victims and simply set them alight.

Our member returned to work for three weeks. During that time, he could not sleep and suffered from nightmares. He became irritable and withdrawn. He saw his GP and was prescribed anti-depressants. He received counselling throughout 1994.

Our member returned to work on light duties in March 1995 but continued to suffer severe problems of post traumatic stress disorder including nightmares and feelings of terrible guilt that he had been unable to do more at the incident. In fact, it seems clear that he did everything he possible could regardless of his own safety.

Although he returned to operational duties in May 1995 he was carried a great deal by his colleagues but really could not cope. He finally went of sick in April 1996 and did not return to work.

Our member was medically retired from the Fire Service on 9 March 1997.

An application was made under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme in September 1994. However, it took six and a half years for a repayment of damages.

Initially, the application was rejected on the grounds that the injuries were not directly attributable to a crime of violence. An application for a review of this decision was made. A member of the then Criminal Injuries Compensation Board decided that he was satisfied that the application did come within the Scheme. Unfortunately, an award of just £2500 was made.

An application for a hearing was made on the grounds that the award was too low. There were lengthy delays in the application being resolved because the medical prognosis was uncertain for some considerable time and our member was only retired from the Fire Service nearly three years after the incident.

The outcome of the further psychiatric treatment was clear and sadly, there was limited improvement in our member's condition. However, a full Schedule of Loss could then be prepared and submitted to the CICA.

Finally, on 6 February 2001 the CICA gave notification of their reconsidered decision and made a final award of £76000 broken down as £40000 for our member's injury itself, £15000 for net losses to date and £21000 for future losses.

The size of the award reflects the extremely serious psychiatric injuries that our member sustained as a result of an extremely horrific incident.

We would like to thank Matthew Tollitt of Thompsons Solicitors for all his involvement with this extremely difficult case and for achieving an excellent result for our member.

**Dave Patton**  
National Officer



THOMPSONS  
SOLICITORS

## LETTERS

# GOOD TO SEE WE ARE MAINTAINING PRINCIPLES

Dear Firefighter

Reading through the March issue of your very well produced magazine, I found myself not only enjoying its presentation, but I am most encouraged that the ideology of our past is still being well maintained. I refer particularly to your "New Vision" statement, which reminds me of my speech on behalf of the Executive Council, which I delivered at the Conway Hall Annual Conference in 1946 entitled "The Post-War British Fire Service". With similar principles as your own, I visualised the Service as being eventually renamed "Fire and Rescue" which, of course, is now adopted.

Looking through old diaries, I could not help re-reading John Horner's statement concerning our Union's vast exploits of 1942. This was the time of amalgamation between the peacetime "Regulars" and the wartime "Auxiliaries". As a representative of the former, I was a member of the National Council at the time before I was elected to the Executive Council, becoming National Treasurer and later Chairman of Standing Orders. A tremendous period of pioneering as the future of our Service began its journey towards a more substantial and universal recognition. No longer were we "The Cinderella Service". We pre-war pros of Bournemouth had moved from a system, which had provided sixteen hours, leave (7 am–11 pm) every eighth day to a 48/24 system.

From one of my books entitled *Bournemouth Firemen at War*, may I quote:

"... the younger men at Central began to conceive their own ideas about their conditions of service and expressed a desire to ally themselves to the growing struggle within the Service for a little more freedom and recognition. There was opposition to the threat of pay cuts, which echoed the concern in other large towns and cities. Somewhat surreptitiously, "Connie" Wyeth and others met Jim Bradley, the first General Secretary of the Firemen's Trade Union, early in 1929. It was from that meeting that this great pioneer, already a sick man, returned to his London home and died. The Firemen's Trade Union became the Fire Brigades Union in 1930 and Percy Kingdom, its General Secretary, also visited Bournemouth in 1934. "Connie" Wyeth, Peter Dorey and Arthur Hatton invited me to join them in producing a "Bournemouth Fire Brigade Charter". Regrettably, that historic document no longer exists and memory of detail is a little faded, but the main clause envisaged a three-shift system of duty, which at that time almost boggled the imagination. We held a number of clandestine meetings in the unoccupied lower flat of No. 14 Cotlands Road ..."

Just a final word as I reflect upon my old comrades and our completely voluntary service (no payment in those days). But also upon our few Head Office staff and outstandingly upon my

friend, General Secretary John Horner, whose name should live forever in the histories of both the FBU and indeed the Fire Service itself. Not only was he a great leader, a deep thinker, whose eloquence was unequalled, but a gracious and good soul. I dined with him and his lovely wife Pat in June 1994 when they were both somewhat despondent. Pat died that same year and John passed away in 1997.

Before I bore you further, please accept my kindest regards and all power to you as you "battle on" with what I understand to be the most extraordinary changes and challenges to our Service.

**E.R. (Ted) Hughes**

# FBU SUPPORT ACHIEVED JUSTICE FOR ME

Dear Firefighter,

I have recently been medically retired from the Fire Service after nearly 26 years service. This is a particularly sad occurrence for me and something I did not originally seek.

However, after four years, enduring an employment experience that I would not have believed possible in this day and age, I am relieved to be leaving an organisation that I was once proud to be a member of. The past two years particularly, have been a nightmare for myself and my family and I cannot deny I am bitter and deeply regret how my career has been ended.

It is true however, that every cloud has a silver lining. When I achieved my last promotion, a principal officer just happened to muse that it might be well to consider if my continued membership of the FBU could create a conflict of interest. Thankfully, I disregarded his less than subtle hint.

In November 1999 when my wife and myself were at our lowest point, I was advised to seek help from the FBU, which I had not previously considered and was put in touch with Mr. Peter Miller, Region 13 Regional Chair. Although he drove me to distraction initially, with what I perceived to be a lack of urgency in his initial analysis of my situation, I soon discovered he was making certain he had all the facts required to represent me and was a person endowed with a professional competence and integrity that would be the envy of many senior Fire Services Officers and Managers.

It was only due to Peter's unswerving commitment and the FBU support, that the justice I believe I deserved was achieved. I dread to think what the situation would be for me and my family without this support.

It is a fact that all life experience, whether good or bad, enhances the wisdom of the individual. I would like to share my wisdom with Fire Service officers who are currently building their careers. As you climb the promotion ladder, you may be unaware that colleagues, level with or above you, are not necessarily what they appear to be; quite the reverse in fact. You



may also consider that continued membership of the FBU is not conducive to your career prospects. I advise you most strongly to take heed of my experience. You may find that your monthly FBU contribution is the most valuable insurance premium you have ever paid.

**David Hobday**  
Divisional Officer (1) Retired

## BEST VALUE CAN BE USED TO MEMBERS' ADVANTAGE

Dear Firefighter,

Last Autumn I received a call from a Control member asking if I could represent her over a difficult issue. She explained to me how she had, for some years, been suffering from Multiple Sclerosis and that recently her condition had only been kept in check by a medication called Beta Interferon, supplied up until that point by the NHS. However, last year the Government had removed this medication from the NHS list on the grounds of cost.

Our member's specialist consultant had informed her that without this treatment she would be in a wheelchair and have to retire from her career within three years.

Although the drug was available privately, at a cost of between £8,000–£10,000 a year, it was outside the price range that could be afforded by our member and her family. Our member was wondering if there could be any way to persuade the Fire Authority to pay for, or contribute towards the costs, to keep her in employment.

In discussion with our member, it occurred to me what a devastating effect of not having this treatment would have, not just for her, but also for her partner (a serving firefighter) and her two children.

After a great deal of research, we eventually presented a case to management under the heading of "Best Value". We managed to put together a report, which showed the financial balance between retiring our member and finding a replacement and the cost of keeping her in employment by contributing towards her treatment. The report showed quite clearly, that under best value, it was the cheaper option for the Authority to keep our member in employment. The report was forwarded to Principal Management and nothing was heard for some time.

Eventually our member received a letter telling her that there was no procedure laid down that would allow the Authority to assist in such a matter. We immediately replied that we wished to appeal to the Fire Authority. We then received a letter from a Principal Officer asking for a meeting with ourselves to explain why the assistance had been refused.

We attended the meeting and although the officer was sympathetic, he stated again that there was no procedure that

would allow them to assist. We argued that best value applied to all procedures and that our report clearly showed that the Authority would actually save money and so we still wished to appeal.

I am pleased to say however, that before we even lodged our appeal, our member received a letter from Principal Management stating that, on reconsideration, they would agree to pay for nine months of treatment a year, leaving our member to pay for the other three. It was also stated that the situation would be reviewed annually. Our member subsequently informed me that she was very happy with the outcome and that she was grateful to the Authority for their assistance and consideration.

I am writing this letter for two reasons. Firstly, I'm sure our member isn't the only person in the country in this position. Secondly, although none of us are fooled by the purpose of legislation such as best value (cuts by any other name!), we can sometimes use them to our members' advantage.

**A. Drage**  
Region 10

## WE WILL NEVER FORGET YOUR COMRADESHIP

Dear Firefighter

On behalf of the Polisario Front and the people of Western Sahara, I would like to thank the FBU for inviting myself and Mohamed Cheik, General Secretary to our Trade Union UGTSAIRIO to attend your Annual Conference in Bridlington.

As well as addressing Conference, Mohamed Cheik and myself had the opportunity to speak to many delegates and explain our cause in some detail.

The generosity, hospitality and comradeship shown to us, is something we will always remember. In particular the donation of £17,915 from Regions, Brigades and individuals was overwhelming and will go a very long way to assisting us in our struggle for independence.

We invite all of you to join us in our Homeland once we are free.

**Breica Abderrahman Lehib**  
Polisario Deputy Representative UK

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR FORCES HELP

Dear Firefighter,

The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association – Forces Help (SSAFA) offers advice, help and friendship to both those currently serving in the Armed Forces, their families, as well as

## LETTERS

the ex-Service community. The eligibility for help is one day's pay in the Services.

Our volunteers are the last line of defence for the 14 million people entitled to call on us for help. They meet the ever-increasing needs of the past and present Service people and their dependants, amongst them an ageing Wartime generation.

If you feel they are deserving of your help the charity would like to hear from you. Our clients may be old, lonely, in financial need or suffering health problems. They may be young Service families who need emotional support. Every year our branches network assists more than 80,000 people.

The charity is always on the look out for more caseworkers, friendship visitors, fundraisers, public relation specialists, treasurers and team leaders.

SSAFA Forces Help offers you all out-of-pocket expenses, teamwork, local support and job satisfaction. All caseworkers are offered training.

Please contact Ann Needle who can give you more information and can put you in touch with your local team. Ann can be reached at:

SSAFA Forces Help, 19 Queen Elizabeth Street, London SE1 2LP. Tel: 020 7463 9223. E-mail [ann.n@ssafa.org.uk](mailto:ann.n@ssafa.org.uk)

## FIREFIGHTERS WHO WORK OUTSIDE HARM OTHERS

Dear Firefighter,

I read with interest the article on Wholetime Retained by Mark Simmons (May/June edition). I was medically retired from Merseyside Fire Brigade in April 1995 whilst waiting for a heart by-pass operation.

After having my successful operation in July 1995, I eventually returned to the workplace and I was lucky enough to get a job with a medical out-of-hours service. During my employment with this company, my fellow workers and I have had two pay rises in four years, one of .0095% and one of 1.985%. I bring this to your attention because like most operational firefighters who are working a four on four off shift system, I worked part-time, I am now shamed to admit, because I am now seeing the other side of the coin!

We are being paid wages just above the minimum wage because the company can and does employ firefighters during their off duty hours, because they are prepared to work for such low wages as a part-timer.

What these firefighters may not seem to realise is that

## ACCIDENT AT WORK

Our member was involved in an accident at work on 29 August 1998. He was attending a fire and there came a time when the fire appliance had to be reversed down an avenue. For this purpose our member and another Firefighter were at the rear of the appliance giving directions to the driver. They walked backwards, using hand signals and the appliance duly reversed and came to halt upon the instruction of our member.

Having completed the reverse, our member then made his own way to the crew cab and was walking around the back of the appliance when suddenly and without warning the appliance was driven in reverse with the result that he was hit and knocked over.

The appliance drove over him and he sustained a severe crushing injury to his right leg. This was severe enough to deglove the leg and as a result he had to undergo amputation of the leg below his knee. He of course experienced shock and pain and was unable to return to work as a Firefighter. He required significant domestic help and prosthetic treatment. He suffered psychological symptoms as a result.

Since his retirement from the Fire Service, he has started to re-train as a counsellor and hopes to obtain employment in

that field in due course. Not only has he lost earning, but he also lost monies as a result of being unable to contribute to the pension scheme.

Proceedings were commenced in the High Court but liability was denied and the Fire Service blamed our member for putting himself in a position of danger.

Initially, they allege he was 15% to blame for the accident. Negotiations got this down to 10%, which, was agreed by our member. The matter was to proceed to trial in May 2001 on quantum only. Shortly before trial an offer was made of £33,434.17, which our member was advised to reject. The other then offered

£400,000 in settlement of the claim, subject to a deduction of the benefits. Again, our member was advised to reject this.

After negotiations the Solicitor representing our member was able to persuade the other side to agree a figure of £400,000 net to our member and in addition they will pay the benefits. Our member was very pleased with the outcome, as this sum of money will give him some security for the future.

This Union would like to thank Julie Woods of Thompsons, for the hard work that she put into making our member's case successful.



**THOMPSONS**  
SOLICITORS

because of their actions, my fellow workers and I are now facing being denied any chance of increasing our wages by working overtime at our job.

The point of my letter is that while you stop overtime working within the Fire Brigade, you and the employers turn a blind eye to the firefighters who continue to work outside as part-time workers and by their actions, stop other workers enjoying a decent standard of living.

As I said earlier, I was just as guilty of working part-time as anyone, but the wages in the Fire Service have risen in line with inflation over the past six years, while other people's have not! I am not crying poverty, as I have a Fire Service pension as well as my employment, but there are workers who don't.

These are the very people who you and the whole of the Fire

Service will be looking to for support in the coming struggle with YOUR employers!

**Barry Mellor**  
OOT Member

## THANK YOU TO THE FBU

Dear Firefighter,

As a member of the Fire Brigades Union I would like to convey my thanks to the parties responsible in assisting me with payments and medical help during my illness while operational and now in retirement.

**Robert Gray**  
Retired Member – Lothian & Borders Fire Brigade

# FIRE BRIGADES UNION

## Gay and Lesbian School



**Apply  
Now!**

## Wortley Hall

**16 to 18 October 2001**

**Crèche facilities available**

**All expenses paid • Apply Now**

**Completed application forms to**

**Ms Y Dubois**

**FBU G&L National Committee**

**PO Box 10555**

**London N1 8XT**







## SOLIDARITY WITH BANGLADESH

# Reality behind the brands

**War on Want recently took three British garment workers to Bangladesh to see the conditions endured by workers in one of the new centres of the garment industry and the possibility for international solidarity in an economy which forces workers into global competition.**

IN A stifling inner-city Dhaka factory, Derbyshire textile worker Pat Gale tries her hand ironing shirts destined for department stores in Britain. The Bangladeshi "ironmen", who normally do the pressing, look on as she explains that this is the job she used to do at her own factory in England. But although the work and equipment are similar, the gulf in pay and conditions could scarcely be wider.

The lines of mainly young women who make UK bound clothes at the Dressmen factory – a showcase in the mushrooming Bangladesh garment industry – get less than one thirtieth of the hourly rate earned by their relatively low-paid British counterparts. Unskilled workers start on the industry minimum of 930 takas a month for a six-day week – £12 at the going exchange rate, or about £60 in terms of what it can buy locally. The more experienced are on 1,295 takas (£16.80) basic. Ten-hour days are the norm.

At the nearby Islam Garments factory, where Gale and two fellow British Trade Unionists arrive unannounced, working conditions are worse, with women machinists packed together, the gangways blocked by barefoot teenagers trimming thread-ends on the floor. Most child labourers have been cleared out of Bangladesh's export sector under international pressure, but several workers at Islam Garments, which supplies Wal-Mart and other Western brand-name buyers, look barely 10 or 11 years old. Others report 12-hour days, one day's holiday a month, regular physical abuse by supervisors and compulsory overtime, sometimes through the night. Women are often raped or robbed as they leave work and garments factory fires have killed 400 workers over the past five years.

The British textile industry is currently losing 2,000 jobs a week and it is mostly to factories like Dressmen and Islam Garments that those jobs are going. Clothing imports have tripled in the past 15 years, overwhelmingly from the developing world and now account for over half the clothes sold in Britain – as the big retailers and brand-name multinationals have switched production to cheap labour contractors in countries like China, Indonesia, Morocco and Bangladesh.

While consumers may have benefited from falling real-terms prices, the corporations and buyers have benefited far more from burgeoning mark-ups and arms-length control. In one meeting after another with Bangladeshi garment workers and Trade Unionists, the three British activists hammer home the need to organise from the bottom up to win better conditions.

But building Trade Unionism in Bangladesh's garments industry – of the kind that has proved effective in countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand and Indonesia – is proving an uphill struggle. There are two million mostly women workers making clothes for export – compared with around 275,000 in Britain – working for 3,300 employers. But are legally registered in only 127 factories and fewer than a dozen employers actually negotiate with them. Workers are regularly sacked, beaten or subjected to police fitups for being active in Unions – two-thirds of Bangladesh's MPs directly or indirectly own garment factories – while an estimated 35 per cent unemployment provides an army of willing substitutes ready to take their jobs.

In the tax-free export processing zone outside Dhaka, where Nike and Tommy Hilfiger codes of conduct proclaim the companies' support for workers' right to free association, Trade Unions are banned. Faced with calls for better wages and conditions, Bangladeshi employers point to the demands for ever-lower prices by the Western buyers. Lutfor Rahman, of the clothing exporters' association, cites the profits of companies like Wal-Mart. "They talk to us about ethics all the time, but will not share their profits. If they pay us more, we can also pay more". Bangladeshi manufacturers now face the prospect of being undercut in turn by even lower-wage workforces in countries like Vietnam, Cambodia and China.

In the nineteenth century, Britain systematically wiped out the cotton cloth export industry in Bengal, then the richest part of India, in favour of British mills. But the huge expansion of the clothes industry in what is now Bangladesh hardly represents the righting of that historical injustice, as the sector is effectively in the grip of Western companies.

Both Bangladeshi and British Union activists find little difficulty in pointing the finger at the multinational corporations who control the industry for their problems, rather than each other. "Most textile workers at home blame the greed of the manufacturers and retailers and there's sympathy for the people who work in the factories in these places," says Sandy Rankin who lost his own job in December, when his Ayrshire knitting factory was closed. "If the general public in the west was confronted with what we have been in the last few days, they might start questioning the companies and demanding change. After what we've seen, anything you can do as a human being, you want to do."

■ For more information contact Nick Dearden at War on Want on 0230 7620 1111 or [ndearden@waronwant.org](mailto:ndearden@waronwant.org).

## FIGHT TO END DEATH PENALTY IN THE USA

# More problems than solutions

**John Duffy**  
Tayside H&S Representative

*Could you pull that switch yourself sir, with a  
sure and steady hand? Could you still tell  
yourself sir, that you're better than I am?*

**From *Billy Austin* by Steve Earle**

THE above lyrics, from the song *Billy Austin* by long time abolitionist campaigner Steve Earle sum up the basic dilemma with justifying the death penalty. In order to execute someone you must kill them.

The person doing that killing must carry out the same act as the perpetrator who is being executed, that is, take the life of another human being. The only difference is that the executioner is acting with the blessing of the state.

A state that is made up of citizens who individually do not have the right to take the life of another, but when acting as a collective give themselves the right to do so. Is this justice; is it retribution, vengeance or simply murder?

Many people have an impulse reaction to crime and criminals and call for various measures – including capital punishment – to be enacted in order to punish the act and prevent repetition.

It is an understandable human response to seek vengeance in the form of punishment when a violent crime has taken place. But surely a civilised society must separate itself from its most primal instincts and set itself higher goals than simple retribution.

We often hear calls in the UK for the re-introduction of capital punishment, but a quick look at the list of miscarriages of justice over the last few years should dissuade most rational people from ever considering such proposals.

Any who still have doubts should look to the chaos of the US system and see that capital punishment creates many more problems than it attempts to solve.

The death penalty was re-introduced in the United States in 1976 and since then, (to June 14, 2001) some 718 people have been put to death. The number of executions annually is on an upwards trend, in the mid 80s there were about 20 deaths per year, by the mid 90s there were over 30 and in 1999 there were 98

executions. Those who have been executed have been killed by a number of different methods:

<b>Lethal injection</b>	<b>553</b>
<b>Electrocution</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>Gas Chamber</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Hanging</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Firing Squad</b>	<b>2</b>

This year there have been 35 executions to June 14, including the Oklahoma bomber Timothy McVeigh who was the first Federal execution in 40 years, plus at least another 17 scheduled with dates known and an undisclosed number planned. All of the executions that have taken place this year have been by lethal injection, this and electrocution are the most common methods. The public generally perceives these methods as quick, painless and clinical. The following are just some anecdotal reports from executions.

**JUNE 28, 2000. MISSOURI. BERT LEROY HUNTER.** Hunter had an unusual reaction to the lethal drugs, repeatedly coughing and gasping for air before he lapsed into unconsciousness. An attorney who witnessed the execution reported that Hunter had “violent convulsions. His head and chest jerked rapidly upward as far as the gurney restraints would allow and then he fell quickly down upon the gurney. His body convulsed back and forth like this repeatedly ... He suffered a violent and agonizing death.”

**JUNE 8, 2000. FLORIDA. BENNIE DEMPS.** It took execution technicians 33 minutes to find suitable veins for the execution. “They butchered me back there,” said Demps in his final statement. “I was in a lot of pain. They cut me in the groin; they cut me in the leg. I was bleeding profusely. This is not an execution, it is murder.”

**JULY 8, 1999. FLORIDA. ALLEN LEE DAVIS.** “Before he was pronounced dead ... the blood from his mouth had poured onto the collar of his white shirt and the blood on his chest had spread to about the size of a dinner plate, even oozing

## FIGHT TO END DEATH PENALTY IN THE USA

through the buckle holes on the leather chest strap holding him to the chair.”

Florida Supreme Court Justice Leander Shaw commented that “the colour photos of Davis depict a man who – for all appearances – was brutally tortured to death by the citizens of Florida.

### **MAY 8, 1997. OKLAHOMA. SCOTT DAWN CARPENTER.**

Carpenter was pronounced dead some 11 minutes after the lethal injection was administered. As the drugs took effect, Carpenter began to gasp and shake. “This was followed by a guttural sound, multiple spasms and gasping for air” until his body stopped moving.

**MARCH 25, 1997. FLORIDA. PEDRO MEDINA.** Electrocuting. A crown of foot-high flames shot from the headpiece during the execution, filling the execution chamber with a stench of thick smoke and gagging the two dozen official witnesses. An official then threw a switch to manually cut off the power and prematurely end the two-minute cycle of 2,000 volts. Medina’s chest continued to heave until the flames stopped and death came.

The main contention of those promoting corporal punishment is that it is a deterrent. The thought that the ultimate sanction of losing your life will dissuade potential criminals from embarking on their life of crime seems to most law-abiding citizens a logical argument. Unfortunately it is generally not the law-abiding citizen that needs convincing. Four recent studies cast doubt that there is any deterrent effect from sentencing people to death and that there was evidence that it created a brutalisation effect.

*Capital Punishment and Deterrence* by John Sorenson et al speculated that if a deterrent effect were to exist it would be found in Texas as that state has a high number of death sentences. They concluded that the number of executions was unrelated to murder rates in general. Author William Bailey studied deterrent effect in Oklahoma by comparing murder rates before and after that state resumed executions. He found no deterrent effect. Another report, *Effects of an execution on homicides in California*, by Ernie Thompson actually found an increase in homicides during the eight months following California’s first execution for 25 years.

In one piece of work authors Keith Harris and Derral Cheatwood compared pairs of counties in various regions throughout the US. They found a higher violent crime rate in death penalty counties. In fact the New York Times found that “states without the death penalty have lower homicide rates than states with the death penalty.” (New York Times 22/09/00). Additionally findings also show that in the murder of police officers and children there is no deterrent effect and that states with the death penalty have a higher rate of general violent crime.

The fact that the death penalty is the ultimate sanction, it would be reasonable to assume that only those criminals that

*An 18ft tall Grim Reaper puppet outside the American Embassy in London during a 1998 Amnesty International demonstration to call for the end of the death penalty*



were definitely guilty would be put to death. However The United States Supreme Court ruled that it was Constitutional to execute as long as the defendant had received a fair trial. We in the UK should know exactly what that could lead to. From 1973 to 2000 (the death penalty was suspended from 1973 to 1976 due to constitutional arguments) there have been 93 exonerations from Death Row and the figure for recent years runs at approximately 5%. Others have been released from Death Row but may still be serving prison terms for reduced crimes.

There are numerous examples of Death Row inmates being wrongly convicted, many cases are ongoing, for example, **Charles Munsey North Carolina; conviction 1996; not released.** In May 1999 Superior Court Judge Thomas Ross threw out Munsey’s murder conviction and ordered a new trial for the 1993 beating death of Shirley Weaver. The judge cited evidence that the state’s key witness had lied, that prosecutors had withheld exculpatory evidence and that another man’s confession to the crime was probably true.

There are also cases of execution despite concerns over guilt. **Gary Graham Texas; convicted 1981; executed 2000.** On June 23, 2000, Gary Graham was executed in Texas, despite claims that he was innocent. Graham was 17 when he was charged with the 1981 robbery and shooting of Bobby Lambert outside a Houston supermarket. He was convicted primarily on the testimony of one witness, Bernadine Skillern, who said she saw the killer’s face for a few seconds through her car windshield, from





ROSIE HALLAM/PA

a distance of 30–40 feet away. Two other witnesses, both who worked at the grocery store and said they got a good look at the assailant, said Graham was not the killer but were never interviewed by Graham's court appointed attorney, Ronald Mock and were not called to testify at trial. Three of the jurors who voted to convict Graham signed affidavits saying they would have voted differently had all of the evidence been available.

When the subject of prison is discussed, generally somewhere in the conversation the subject of cost will come up. The line, "keeping them for ever more" will be used. Yes, it costs to keep a prisoner; however, in the US it costs on average six times as much to kill one person as it does to incarcerate them for life. Enforcing the death penalty costs Florida \$51 million a year above and beyond what it would cost to punish all first-degree murderers with life in prison without parole. Based on the 44 executions Florida has carried out since 1976, that amounts to a cost of \$24 million for each execution.

According to an article in the Louisiana Sunday Advertiser, prosecutor Phil Haney, who often pushes for the death penalty, says if he could be sure 'life in prison really meant life in prison,' he would be for abolishing the death penalty. It's a matter of economics, he said. "It just costs too much to execute someone." (The Sunday Advertiser, 8/23/98)

Although there is a slightly higher percentage of whites on Death Row than blacks, a perpetrator is four times more likely to get the death penalty if he or she is black. There have been exam-

inations of some form in most Death Penalty states and in 96% there is some indication of bias in relation to race-of-victim or race-of-defendant or both. Race is more likely to effect death sentencing than smoking effects the likelihood of dying from heart disease. And whilst knowledge of the latter has had an impact of most aspects of life there has been no change in the former. Despite legislation impacting on discrimination in other areas such as employment and housing, there has – with the exception of Kentucky – been no protection against racism in sentencing.

The decision as to who should live and who should die generally lies with whites. The District Attorneys or prosecutors are almost exclusively white, black jurors often find themselves barred and racial slurs and stereotyping is often used by prosecutors and even sometimes by the defence. This results in a justice system that, "sees blacks frequently put to death for murdering whites but whites are almost never executed for murdering blacks." – Richard C Dieter, Executive Director, Death Penalty Information Centre.

The death penalty is failing in its primary objective, that is, as a deterrent, it is costly, it is racist and it kills innocent people. Yet it is the primary route used by politicians to show that they are tough on crime. The United States spends 94% of all criminal justice dollars after the crime is committed instead of on prevention.

Supporters of the death penalty will claim that those who oppose its use are soft on criminals. Those who wish to abolish it want to see it replaced with an alternative, they do not want to see criminals freed, or let off. Those in favour will remind us of the victims and their families and of course they must never be forgotten, but this returns to the question of vengeance. One victim knows the cost only too well, Bud Welch tells us, "When my daughter, Julie, was killed, I joined a "club" that I wish had no members: The price of admission is too high. I know the pain of losing a loved one because of a senseless act of violence. The execution of Timothy McVeigh will not bring back Julie or her colleagues, nor will it end the grieving for any one of the victims of the Oklahoma City bombing. Revenge and hate are the reasons 168 people died that day in 1995. I oppose the death penalty absolutely, in all cases, because in all cases it is an act of revenge and hatred."

There must be an answer, the death penalty is morally, socially and economically wrong, there must be a better way.

There are currently 3,711 inmates on Death Row in the United States. FBU members can help by raising this issue with colleagues, fellow Trade Unionists and politicians. Many of us have family and friends in the US, or travel there on holiday. Raise this issue at every opportunity.

■ For more information:

[www.nodeathpenalty.org](http://www.nodeathpenalty.org)

[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

[www.deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org)

[www.cuadp.org](http://www.cuadp.org)

## PARAGUAY AND ITS FIRE SERVICE

# Not one area that is not desperately in need of investment and improvement

I WAS, until I recently retired, in Lancashire Fire And Rescue Service and served as the Station Commander at Accrington Fire Station, I was also a member of the Fire Brigades Union for 31 years and like you read the *Firefighter* and thought, maybe like you, "what are all these articles about, South Africa, Cuba, third World Countries, human rights, politics etc. Good heavens above, there's enough problems here and let's read something about the Fire Service in the UK".

But after a time realised that you are not limited to one thing, you can help your mates, the people in your area and even people overseas. Below is part of a report that was submitted to the "Paraguayan Fire Service" after a visit at their request last year. The point in submitting this article (and I am not a journalist) to the *Firefighter* is in the hope that, it will prompt areas to donate anything that is serviceable. The need is great, the situation there is more than dire, lives are been lost and property destroyed, the sadness is they have so little to start with and they are doing their best, they just want a leg up that's all.

The Republic of Paraguay is a landlocked Country in Central South America, north east of Argentina. Bordered by Brazil, Argentina and Bolivia with a population of approximately five and a half million people. With a land size of approximately 400,000 sq kilometres. The climate is subtropical and the country has natural resources of timber, iron ore, manganese, limestone and hydropower.

Paraguay has a market economy marked by a large informal sector, which re-exports imported consumer goods to neighbouring countries (electronics, whiskeys, perfumes, cigarettes and office equipment). A large percentage of the population derive their living from agricultural activities, often on a subsistence basis. From which they export cotton, soya beans, timber, vegetable oils, meat products and coffee. The formal sector is largely oriented toward services. The GDP declined by 0.5% in the year 1998. Of the population nearly 22% live below the poverty line.

The Fire Service is almost exclusively provided by volunteers (there being an extremely small Police/Fire Service to cover the capital Asuncion). Little or no funding is provided by either Central or Local Government. All the finance to meet the needs of the Fire Service is raised through donations from patrons, local businesses, voluntary contributions from individuals, or fund

raising undertaken by the Firefighters themselves. To date there are two organisations who oversee the Fire Service in the country; they are the Cuerpo de Bomberos Voluntarios del Paraguay, which in the main covers the Capital Asuncion and the Federation of Firemen who cover the remainder of the Country. Although there are moves afoot to embrace the whole of the countries Firefighting organisations under one grouping.

During the course of our stay in Paraguay, we visited the following Fire Stations in Asuncion, Companies 1,2,3,5,7,8,9,11. Outside of the capital we either visited or met representatives from amongst the following towns: Carapegua, San Ignacio,

Encarnacion, Santa Rita, Cornel Oviedo, Fernando de la Mora, Capitan Miranda, Caaguazu, Concepcion, Piribebey, Lague, Pedro Juan Caballero, Caacupe, Presidente Franco, Ciudad del Este, Ciudad de Pilar, San Lorenzo, Colonias Unidas, Sa Ignacio Misiones.

By European standards it really wasn't unreasonable to come to the conclusion that what we saw of the Paraguayan Fire Service, (despite the heroic efforts on behalf of the volunteers), it was in the main totally inadequately financed and extremely poorly equipped, in virtually every aspect, be it fire equipment, breathing apparatus, personnel clothing, fire appliances, station facilities, mobilising equipment, rescue equipment, the provision of hydrants, teaching and training and Fire Safety legislation, everything and any thing was in short supply, non existent, or on it's last legs, or adapted and just about suitable.

There was not one area that is not desperately in need of investment and improvement. It should be borne in mind that they, the volunteers, have to raise the money to buy the land, to build the Fire Stations, to purchase the appliances, to obtain the equipment, to pay for their uniforms and to give up their free time to crew the appliances.

Having said all that, it would be remiss not to comment on the one major and vital element they can be justifiably proud of. That is their collective spirit, commitment and sense of community, enthusiasm and true altruism. The country and the community should be justifiably proud of the men and women who freely give of their time, energy and money in attempting to establish a Fire Service, for the people and by the people. The true volunteer who gives freely is by far the most positive attribute they have. They really are impressive.



## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL APPEAL

# A world free of the human rights abuse – help us achieve our dream

ON 28 MAY 1961, an article was published in The Observer that was to change the world forever. Written by British lawyer Peter Benenson, it was called “The Forgotten Prisoners” and its publication marked the birth of Amnesty International.

Peter Benenson had been deeply moved by the cases of six individuals imprisoned and persecuted for their peacefully held beliefs. In his article he described them as “prisoners of conscience” and declared that the Appeal for Amnesty 1961 was committed to working impartially for the release of these and all other such prisoners.

Following the article’s publication all six of the featured men regained their freedom. Since then, thanks entirely to supporters like the Fire Brigades Union, Amnesty International has gone on to become the largest independent human rights organisation in the world. We have raised the issue of human rights to a level on the international political agenda that was unimaginable 40 years ago. And we have taken up the cases of thousands of prisoners of conscience, many of whom are now free. None of this success would have been possible without the commitment of our supporters over the years, yourself included. For that support, on behalf of all of the people we have campaigned for, I want to thank you.

But of course there is still much work to do – and right now we need your support as much as ever.

Over the last 40 years we have built a worldwide network of contacts and researchers that is so effective, it is now almost impossible for Governments to keep their human rights abuses secret from us.

As a result of this success, we are constantly becoming aware of more and more people who need our help.

Take the case of Ngawang Choephel, for example, a Tibetan musician who has been sentenced to 18 years imprisonment by the Chinese authorities.

Ngawang was detained in August 1995 and held in incommunicado detention without charge for over 14 months. Finally, in December 1996, he was sentenced to 18 years’ imprisonment for “espionage” and “counter revolutionary activities” following an unfair trial that was held in secret. No evidence of his alleged

offence has ever been made public. There is nothing to indicate that Ngawang Choephel was travelling in Tibet for any other reason than his stated purpose: to film and record traditional Tibetan performing arts for a documentary he was making.

Ngawang is now in poor health and in need of medical treatment. In August 2000 his mother and uncle were permitted to see him – the first visit he had received in five years. During the visit Ngawang and his family were allowed no privacy or physical contact. Ngawang’s mother said that her son, who is suffering from liver, lung and stomach ailments, “was just skin and bones”.

40 years ago the world might never have heard of Ngawang Choephel. Today, thanks to you, he has hope.

Amnesty International is campaigning for Ngawang’s release. By making a donation to our 40th Birthday Forget Me Not Appeal,

you can help keep the hope of freedom alive for Ngawang and many others like him. For prisoners of conscience one of the greatest torments is the fear that they may simply be forgotten. Your support today will help spare Ngawang that torment.

Over the last 40 years Amnesty International has successfully come to the aid of thousands of prisoners of

conscience like Ngawang. Thanks to people like you, those prisoners have known hope where once there was only despair. Your support has often been the one life-saving light in their terrible darkness. But if we are to continue offering hope, we need your support again. It costs on average £400 to take up and research a case like Ngawang’s. If just ten supporters can give £40 to our 40th Anniversary Appeal, one more prisoner of conscience will know they have not been forgotten.

When Peter Benenson recently accepted the Pride of Britain award for lifetime achievement, he did so on behalf of our supporters – and that means you. In his acceptance speech he expressed the hope that his grandchildren may come to know a world free of the human rights abuses we have all worked so hard to eradicate. By making a donation again today, you can bring us closer than ever to the realisation of that dream.

**Thank you**

**Kate Allen**

**Director, Amnesty International UK**

**For prisoners of conscience one of the greatest torments is the fear that they may simply be forgotten. Your support will help spare them that torment**



## JUSTICE FOR SHIBLU RAHMAN

# Campaign will continue until justice is done

SHIBLU Rahman, a 34 year old Bangladeshi was murdered in the early hours of 1 April outside his home in Bow.

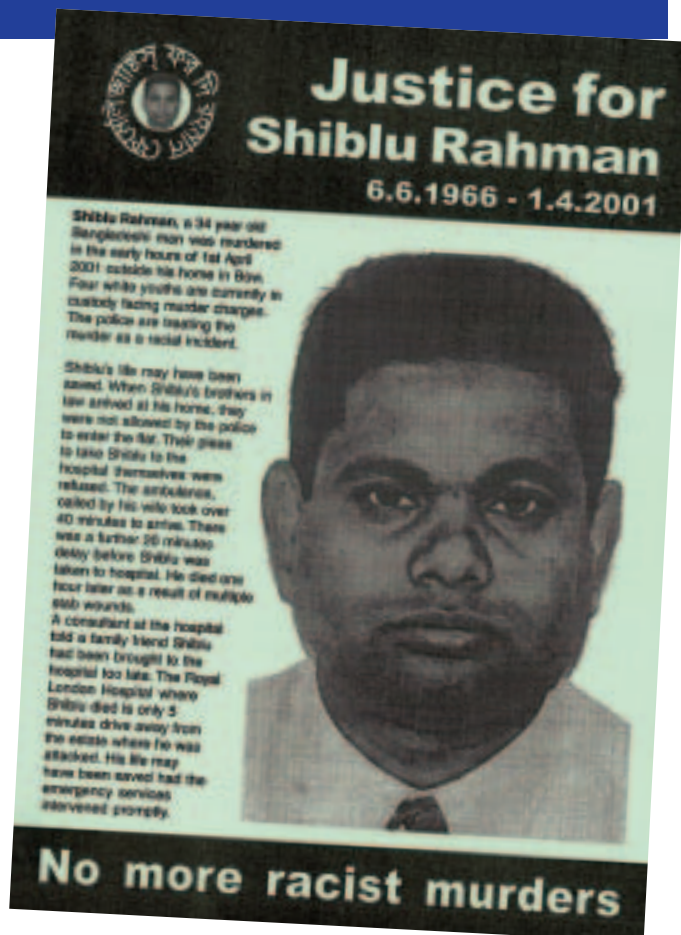
Four white youths face murder charges. The police are treating the murder as a racial incident.

Shiblu's life might have been saved. When Shiblu's brothers in law arrived at his home, they were not allowed by the police to enter the flat. Their pleas to take Shiblu to the hospital themselves were refused. The ambulance called by his wife took over 40 minutes to arrive. There was a further 20 minutes delay before Shiblu was taken to hospital. He died one hour later as a result of multiple stab wounds.

A consultant at the hospital told a family friend Shiblu had been brought to the hospital too late. The Royal London Hospital where Shiblu died is only five minutes drive away from the estate where he was attacked. His life may have been saved had the emergency services intervened promptly.

Justice for the Rahman Family campaign was set up to campaign for those responsible for Shiblu's murder to be brought to justice and face the full might of the law. The trial of the four people accused of murdering Shiblu is to take place in the next few months. The campaign will continue until justice is done and the crucial questions about the conduct of the emergency services are answered.

1. The campaign is calling for an investigation of the police's conduct at Shiblu's home.
2. We want an investigation into the failure of the ambulance to



arrive before it was too late.

What you can do:

- Raise the case in your organisation/Trade Union Branch/Community Group and send messages of support and donations to the campaign.
- Attend court during the trial. Please call the NAAR office to confirm the details nearer the time.

If you wish to support the Justice for the Rahman Family campaign and can enclose a donation to campaigning costs, please contact: Justice for the Rahman Family, c/o NAAR, 28 Commercial Street, London E1

Tel: 020 7247 9907 / 07957 297964 / 07956 127062 /

07720 575226

E-mail: AA\_R@compuserve.com



Have you seen our new website?

**www.fbu.org.uk**

## BA Organization of Work, Economics & Labour Law also Certificate/Foundation Degree

THIS programme is offered by Birkbeck's School of Management and Organizational Psychology, in association with the Institute of Employment Rights. Teaching is conducted by a multi-disciplinary team of staff from Birkbeck's School of Management and Organizational Psychology and members of the Institute of Employment Rights. Most of the teaching team also have extensive non-academic experience as both employees and activists.

The programme is designed for those who are involved, or wish to be involved, in work organization, worker representation and collective bargaining and also for anyone interested in how the workplace is governed. Course units cover the employment relationship and the organization of business from the standpoints of law, economics, organizational psychology, politics and management theory. Themes running across these subjects will include the effects of new technology, European integration and globalisation. There will be a particular focus on the role of Trade Unions; on ways in which the interests of employers, employees and other stakeholders can be reconciled for mutual benefit; and on employee ownership. Lectures will take place over three block release weeks per year and students must be prepared to undertake readings and coursework independently between these periods.

The programme is designed to enable students to progress from Certificate level in year 1 through to BA Honours at the end of year 4. To achieve the full degree, students must successfully complete the four-year programme; however on successful completion of year 1 they may receive a Certificate of Continuing Education and on successful completion of year 3 a Foundation Degree. All degrees and awards are from Birkbeck, University of London.

### ADMISSIONS POLICY

If you are 21 years of age or over, the College can waive the requirement for formal qualifications and make its own assessment of your skills and knowledge and decide whether these are sufficient to enable you to succeed in your chosen degree course. In this case you will be set an essay to submit along with an application form and a copy of your CV. You may then be invited to attend an interview, which will include an admissions test.

If you are under 21 years of age, you will need to meet the normal university entrance requirements with formal qualifications, in addition to our entrance test and interview.



Further enquiries can be made to:

Sally Bland, Departmental Secretary, Department of Management, Birkbeck, University of London, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX.

Telephone 020 7631 6836; Fax 020 7631 6769; E-mail [undergrad@mbs.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:undergrad@mbs.bbk.ac.uk)  
Web [www.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.bbk.ac.uk)

**BIRKBECK** is a leading research institution, located in Bloomsbury. The College forms part of the University of London and specialises in part-time evening education for mature students. The College has over 6,000 students currently following undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses. As well as a library, a range of computing facilities and child care provision for students at Birkbeck, there are also social, recreational and refreshment facilities available in the College and at the University of London Union.

Birkbeck's School of Management and Organizational Psychology is an internationally recognised centre for research and education in employment practices, the causes and effects of technological innovation and corporate governance and regulation.

**THE INSTITUTE OF EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS** is an independent think-tank specializing in employment law. Established in 1989, the Institute is a unique network of Trade Unionists, academics and lawyers. Using the specialist expertise of this network, the Institute's aim is to develop policy ideas for a framework of labour law that promotes social justice, economic efficiency, democracy and fairness at work.

## MASTER OF ARTS LABOUR AND TRADE UNION STUDIES



### INTRODUCTION

This is a postgraduate course, for labour Movement activists and practitioners which will provide an advanced study of labour Movement history, theory and practice.

The course is run by The Centre for Trade Union Studies based at the University of North London in conjunction with the Centre for Equality Research in Business.

### HOW ARE THE COURSES ASSESSED

All modules are assessed by means of coursework of different varieties - essays, report, oral presentations.

There are no examinations.

### COURSE STRUCTURE

The approach of the course is to place the labour Movement within the context of national and international development of the capitalist economy, as well as within the dominant political and ideological framework of society, both current and historical.

### CORE MODULES

Three taught core modules concentrate on examining this context. These are:

- The Labour Movement, the Labour process and the economy
- Trade Unionism - the Ideological, Political and Legal context
- Labour Race and Empire: Labour History 1880-1960

### OPTION MODULES

Other modules provide for the study of a range of current labour Movement issues. You will choose two modules from the following..

- Comparative Employment Systems
- Trade Union Issues
- Industrial Relations: Context and Practice
- Labour Law Public Policy and Employment
- Gender and Work
- Managing Diversity in a European Context
- Human Resource Strategy

### DISSERTATION

In addition you will write a double module dissertation on a chosen aspect of Trade Union labour studies. This will help to develop your research skills as well as providing you with an opportunity for supervised in-depth study. Preparatory training for this will be undertaken via the fourth core module Research Methodology: Researching the Labour Movement.

### DURATION

You can complete the course in two years by attending on two evenings per week, or take longer by attending on one evening per week.

### TUC LIBRARY COLLECTION

The course benefits from the unique resource base of the TUC Library Collection at the University. The course is supported by experienced staff with a strong research base and long-standing commitment and expertise in Trade Union education.

### ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

You are welcome to apply if you have a relevant first degree or relevant labour Movement experience.

### FEES

The basic tuition fee for 2000/2001 was:

UK/EU students £ 1,360 (part-time) for the full MA course. £ 170 per module (part-time). Discounts are usually available for early payment, or you may pay by instalments. As fees may change and may depend on your personal circumstances, please confirm the fee to be paid when you enrol.

### HOW TO APPLY

For further information please contact Mary Davis, Centre for Trade Union Studies, tel: 020 7753 3375, email [m.davis@unl.ac.uk](mailto:m.davis@unl.ac.uk)

For an application form, please contact our Postgraduate Admissions Office  
University of North London, 166-220 Holloway Road  
London N7 8DB

Tel: 020 775 3333, Fax: 020 7753 3272, Email: [admissions@unl.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@unl.ac.uk)  
More information is also available on our website: [www.unl.ac.uk](http://www.unl.ac.uk)

**GLOBAL WOMEN'S STRIKE**

# Women's response to globalisation

ON International Women's Day, 8 March 2001 women in over 60 countries went on strike against no pay, low pay and too much work. As in 2000 (see *Firefighter* September 2000) women took off whatever time they could from housework, childcare, waged jobs and farm work; put brooms outside their doors, sent e-mails to the Government and in cities and villages in India, Uganda, Guyana, South America and across the USA and Europe, they demonstrated to drive home their global demands:

- Payment for all caring work – in wages, pensions, land and other resources. What is more valuable than raising children and caring for others? Invest in life and welfare, not military budgets and prisons.
- Pay equity for all, women and men, in the global market.
- Paid maternity leave, breastfeeding breaks and other benefits – stop penalising us for being women.
- Abolition of "Third World debt" ...
- Accessible clean water, healthcare, housing, transport, literacy.
- Non-polluting energy and technology which shortens the hours we work ...
- Protection and asylum from all violence and persecution, including by family members and people in positions of authority.
- Freedom of movement. Capital travels freely, why not people?

The Global Women's Strike (GWS) 2000 was not only the first global strike of women but probably the first ever global strike! GWS 2001 went further in involving waged workers together with women working unwaged at home.

In Los Angeles the Homecare Workers Union and the Garment Workers Union called out their members and the HWU organised a dramatic "banner drop" from the roof of their headquarters. In English and Spanish, the 30 foot high banner read: "Caring Work Counts, end no pay and low pay". The LA County Federation of Labor donated \$500 and other resources.

In Philadelphia, which last year launched the international pay equity petition, the local Coalition of Labour Union Women, AFL-CIO (equivalent of the TUC) and AFSCME (roughly equivalent of UNISON) all sponsored a "Two-Hour Lunch Break for Women Against No Pay and Low Pay and for Pay Equity" and spoke at the lunchtime rally in City Hall.

In Argentina, the huge women's "multisectorial" united women from different Unions normally bitterly divided along Party lines, along with women journalists, pensioners and housewives, in support of the strike and its demands, including "pensions without contributions for workers without wages". The Union of Public Employees issued their own GWS leaflets and the Bus Employees Union provided transport for strike events.

In Peru the strike was called by CCTH – the Union of domestic workers, who had always been seen as "the people who filled the halls, as if domestic work issues had nothing to do with the economic issues of the country." At a post-strike London conference of women from 11 countries, a member explained what it means that "on a day that's so important as International Women's Day, for domestic workers to be the ones to call the strike!" Many other Unions supported and one leader announced, "Companeros, we must remember this strike is being called by our sisters, the domestic workers, the most exploited workers, living in a situation of slavery in their places of work."

In Spain one of the three major Unions the CGT (Confederacion General del Trabajo) officially called for a national two-hour general strike on International Women's Day 8 March for two hours on every shift, day and night. Their demands included "a social wage for all women workers in their own home ... in cases of separation from their husband where the husband is at fault ..." – explicitly calling for housework and childcare to be recognised as "work" worthy of wages!

In London, a spectacular, loud and lively caravan led by a giant woman puppet paraded down Whitehall and around Parliament Square. Sex workers from Soho marched protesting raids and deportation of immigrant women; women with disabilities – some in wheelchairs – joined in, as did Black and immigrant women, "Dykes on Strike", older women, mothers with push-chairs defending welfare benefits, women cyclists from Critical Mass and more. Other cities with GWS activities included Sheffield, Liverpool, Brighton and Canterbury. Payday, who co-ordinated men's support issued a startling collection of statements from men, spelling out how the Strike speaks to their needs.

Union participation in Britain was less than elsewhere, with some officials reluctant to join forces with workers who, caring for others, have no wage at all. But strong support did come in,





**Chhattisgarh, India: Dalit and tribal village women chant 'wages for all work' as they travel to meet officials in Bhopal and Delhi**



**Left – Ghana: People converge on a People's Education office**



**Above – Los Angeles: Global Women's Strikers join Janitors for Justice, whose organising features in Ken Loach's film Bread and Roses**

including from the FBU (thanks for a £100 donation!). National Women's Committee secretary Vicky Knight had told the GWS about issues that women in the service face: equal pay and conditions for control room staff, paid parental leave and better paid time off for maternity and paternity leave. Like women in all male-identified jobs, women firefighters can sometimes face horrendous sex discrimination and sexual harassment.

And like workers in every public service, women and men in the FBU are fighting the mergers, cuts and creeping privatisation that lead to worse conditions and endanger both workers and lives and homes in the communities they serve. All of these issues were brought out in the Strike, including through the participation of women hospital workers in Dudley – who sent a ringing endorsement to the London rally and wore GWS badges and distributed materials in the hospitals where they are staging off

the Government's privatising zeal.

The day ended with a speak out and entertainment by the Frank Chickens, Songlines international choir, Red Jenn and the Raya Crew, including firefighter Simon Green. His verdict on the evening was, "events don't get much better than this ... exploitation, low pay, bad health, the list is endless ... change soon come, keep the faith."

Model resolutions, pay equity petitions, leaflets and other materials for GWS 2002 are already under way. Do get in touch, or visit the website and help make sure the needs and views of Fire Service workers are reflected!

International Wages for Housework Campaign

Tel: 0207 482 2496 Fax: 0207 209 4761

Email: [Womenstrike8m@server101.com](mailto:Womenstrike8m@server101.com)

Website: <http://womenstrike8m.server101.com>



## ARTHUR CHARLES MEMORIAL COMPETITION

# Socialist Alliance – because there's no choice



**Joe Hearne,  
Bedfordshire FBU –  
Region 10, stood  
against the Labour  
Party as a Socialist  
Alliance candidate  
in the General**

**Election, in this entry for the Arthur Charles  
Memorial Competition, he explains why**

THE beginning of my story, for the purposes of this essay anyway, is in August 1977. Working in a job that I hated and my partner having left me due to my low self-esteem and moodiness I decided a change of direction was needed. Following a conversation with an acquaintance, I applied to join the Fire Service.

As I sit typing these words it is 23 years later in December 2000 and I have just been done a tremendous honour. Two weeks ago I was selected by the Bedfordshire Socialist Alliance as its candidate to fight the next General Election in the Labour held constituency of Luton South. By the time anyone reads this, apart from the judges of the Arthur Charles Memorial Essay, the election will probably have taken place.

Between these two events is a story which I believe will have a familiar ring to it among many Trade Union activists and Labour Party supporters, perhaps particularly within the Fire Brigades Union.

Back in 1977, I was accepted for training as a fireman (as we were called then). The next few weeks were pretty intense but we recruits were soon made aware that all was not rosy in our newly adopted employment. We had all joined the Union and we were invited to some branch meetings where we were told that a strike vote had been won and as recruits who had had no involvement in the run-up to that vote, no one would blame us if we took no part in the strike. We held a meeting amongst ourselves and all decided that the Union's case was good and that we would strike

as well. In the next nine weeks I learned all about comradeship and solidarity as I joined the picket at my nearest fire station.

The Union's case in essence was that firefighters (I will use the correct term from now on even though it was rarely used at the time) and Control staff worked excessive hours for a pittance and that our communities were being poorly protected by such an under resourced service. A measure of the poverty of those days was that almost no firefighters owned their own homes and most of those with families were receiving income support. The Labour Government of James Callaghan had agreed with the various studies into the job that said improvements in pay and conditions were necessary but it had a big problem. A condition of getting a loan from the International Monetary Fund was a cutting of public sector expenditure and the Government had decided to impose a rigid pay freeze. They had to choose between being fair to workers or keeping global capitalism happy. No contest. The Government were trying to enforce a pay rise limit of 10 per cent; our claim was for 30 per cent. I know this sounds outrageous now but you have to remember that inflation was running at 16 per cent and firefighters' pay had been slipping for years. The strike ended after nine weeks and we only got 10 per cent but we got a shorter working week, 10,000 extra firefighters were employed and our pay was to be set by a formula, which would keep us in the upper quartile of skilled manual workers. The Labour Government had kept its pay policy intact but we had secured our future and we became a group of workers who had taken action and that kept us strong for many years into the future. A year later many other workers took action against cuts and pay restraint. It was called "the winter of discontent" by the press and it led to Labour's downfall and 18 years of Tory rule. I nearly said the start of Thatcherism but I think that would be inaccurate. Thatcherism started with Callaghan and the IMF loan and continues to this day.

That was my baptism into industrial politics. A few years later, in the early eighties, I took the job of branch minutes secretary and was persuaded to attend Regional and National FBU schools. At the time, there was a struggle going on for the heart and soul of the Labour Party and at National School there was intense debate about the possibilities opening up for Trade Unionists by the campaign of Tony Benn to democratise the Party. We could be influential in setting Party policy, in selecting local and parliamentary candidates and in de-selecting them if they did not carry



JOHN HARRIS/REPTORTGICAL.CO.UK

**Cortonwood, Yorkshire, February 1984 –The last straw for me was the 1984-85 miners strike**

out our policies. I and many others from those schools joined the Labour Party and Trades Councils and became active in promoting FBU interests in particular and socialist politics generally. Tony Benn failed in his bid for Deputy Leader and Neil Kinnock and Denis Healey took the Party further to the right. There was a witch-hunt of militants and socialism was gradually eased out of the Party programme. Although Labour were making progress in local elections they proved to be as bad as the Tories when it came to cutting public services. With a few honourable exceptions, they did nothing to help workers in struggle and tacitly supported Thatcher's anti Trade Union legislation. The last straw for me was the 1984-85 miners strike. The miners were totally betrayed by the Labour Party and by the TUC and I was ashamed that we had not taken the opportunity to stop Thatcher before she could set the working class back 100 years. I was a member of a Party that I could not recommend my members to vote for and I left soon afterwards.

I remember the frustration and fury I felt when as FBU representative for my Brigade, I was summonsed, along with representatives of all the other public sector, to a meeting with the County Council to discuss the consequences of their proposed budget for the next year. Because of the impossible capping limits set by the Conservative Central Government there would have to be cuts and redundancies. The leaders of the three political groups were there to explain why they all supported the proposed budget and to negotiate with us Union representatives the best

way to handle the redundancies. I was proud to be able to say, before I stormed out, that if there were any bloody redundancies in the Fire Service there would be an immediate local strike closely followed by a national Fire Service strike and that it was a bloody disgrace that there was no political opposition to the cuts on the Council. What was the point of voting Labour or Conservative or Liberal when they all got together and agreed a policy? Years later, I was again asked to a meeting, now with the new Combined Fire Authority, a quango several places removed from democratic accountability, to discuss proposed efficiency savings. The Labour Chair opened the meeting by saying "when we sit as the Fire Authority we leave politics outside the door" and the Conservative Vice-Chair then endorsed that sentiment. "So it's a stitch up then" said I and informed them that if we could expect no help from any politicians we would move straight to industrial action.

That is what happens when people feel that they are not being represented by the political process. They either sink into despair and apathy or they take some form of direct action. The frustration I felt then is now being felt by millions of natural Labour supporters as they have come to realise that they have no real choice on polling day.

I have since found out more about the history of the Labour Party and it appears that such betrayals have punctuated Labour's existence from the start. It has been said that the Party was formed by the capitalist establishment to dissipate workers' aspi-

# ARTHUR CHARLES MEMORIAL COMPETITION

rations and prevent them from seizing power by revolution, a very real possibility in the early decades of the twentieth century. Certainly, at their moments of greatest success Labour seem to have taken fright and allowed the capitalist establishment to take back the initiative but at least they always had policies that promised to improve the lot of workers and their dependants and that would restrain the rapacious excesses of the bosses. When elections came round there was a clear choice between Labour and Conservative. Tony Blair has changed all that. There was no need to dump Clause 4 of the Labour Party Constitution in order to get elected. It promised to take the means of production into public ownership and was always largely symbolic but it was a powerful symbol that this Party stood for the workers. In 1997 the country was ready to dump the Tories and their policies anyway. Over the last five years or so, Tony Blair and his circle have constructed a "neo-liberal" Party within a Party on top of the Labour Party. Neo-liberal was the term used to describe Margaret Thatcher. She was not a true Conservative it was said; she did not want to conserve anything. She wanted to change this country root and branch into a free market paradise where workers were a flexible commodity to be bought and sold like goods, to be used and discarded without a thought for the social consequences – "there is no such thing as society." Blair has adopted the same philosophy. With big business funding and now state patronage, Blair's machine has lifted itself away from the ties that the old Labour Party had to the organised working class. There is now a large gap between the needs and desires of the majority of politically aware working-class people on the one side and the policies of the Labour machine on the other. Millions of working-class people have effectively been disenfranchised. The Trade Union leaders, demoralised after 18 years of Tory battering, have submitted to Blair. The Millbank machine has not needed to move to cut all the mechanisms of Labour's Trade Union link, as it threatened to do before the 1997 election. At present it can get Union money and fairly safe Union block votes, at low cost. The theoretical possibility is still there of using their remaining positions in the Labour structure to pursue Union demands but it does not happen because the Union leaders are so wretched and because only the most determined Union leaders are likely to risk provoking the disfavour of the leader.

We have been told that globalisation and the dominance of corporate power are inevitable. Democratic Governments must be coalitions of Social Democrats and progressive Conservatives (a contradiction in terms if ever I heard one) coming together to "manage" the country with focus groups to maintain the illusion of listening to the people and spin-doctors to sell the resulting stitch-ups. Both main parties are courted by big corporations and millionaire bosses giving large donations and expecting and

getting business-friendly policies from whoever wins elections. This leaves workers and their pensioners, the majority of ordinary people in fact, unrepresented and marginalised. The Labour Party now insists that its MPs and Councillors stay on-message and its few dissenting voices are isolated and silenced. Its Annual Conference is now a stage-managed showpiece after the style of the Republican and Democrat Conventions in the USA.

The main danger in these developments is to democracy itself. As more and more people come to realise that they have no real choice on polling day they will feel that it is not worth bothering to vote at all. This tendency is already evident in the USA and is growing here. Even more worrying is that it may lead to a situation similar to that of the thirties with the re-emergence of far right parties exploiting the despair felt by victims of growing disparity of opportunity and social exclusion.

The task for politically aware workers and Trade Unionists is to turn this situation around before it is too late. We need a strong, united Party, rooted in and committed to democracy, socialism and internationalism and we must build it ourselves from the

bottom up. The last sentence was paraphrasing Tony Benn writing only last October in "Voice of the ". He was advocating rebuilding the Labour Party but I am convinced there is little chance of that happening from within the Labour Party itself, certainly not before the next election. We need a new political grouping to stand as a clear alternative to the timid, centre-right consensus being offered to voters by the three mainstream political parties at present. That grouping now exists.

Socialist Alliances were first formed to fight the election for the new Greater London Assembly. The Labour Government and Labour Councils were implementing

policies that were indistinguishable from those of the Tories.

Since Labour was elected in 1997:

- they have held down spending on public services to the limits set by the Tories;
- they have kept Tory anti Trade Union laws;
- they have prevented European civil rights legislation being applied to Britain;
- they have ignored their own "ethical foreign policy" mandate with arms sales to such regimes as Indonesia and they trade with civil and human rights abusers;
- they have proved to be as much the puppets of the United States as were the Tories supporting NATO military adventures and global capitalism;
- they have cut the benefits of single parents and the disabled;
- they have failed to link pensions with earnings and they means-test further assistance;
- they have privatised more council housing in four years than the Tories did in 18 years;

**We need a new political grouping to stand as a clear alternative to the timid, centre-right consensus being offered to voters by the three mainstream political parties**



- they have imposed fees on students in further and higher education;
- they allow private companies to continue to run the railways for profit to the detriment of safety and service;
- they are on course to do the same to the London Underground and Air Traffic Control;
- they insist on imposing Private Finance Initiatives on hospitals and other civic projects;
- they have presided over manufacturing and engineering industry being replaced with low paid or part-time employment leaving British workers among the worst paid and insecure in Europe at a time when the British economy has grown making us the fourth richest country in the world.

This list is an absolutely damning indictment and workers are entitled to wonder where all this prosperity is going and if this was what they elected a Labour Government for.

The Socialist Alliance did pretty well in London and of course they helped get Ken Livingstone elected as mayor. This was the springboard for Socialist Alliances to be formed all over the country and when I became aware that several groups and individuals were considering the possibility of a Bedfordshire Socialist Alliance, I realised that this was just what I had been advocating for years and I joined the steering committee. We made a number of decisions both for the short term and for the years ahead.

In the short term we decided that we must contest the next General Election probably in May 2001. We would not be in a position to contest all six parliamentary seats in Bedfordshire so we discussed where our energies would best be concentrated. Three of the Bedfordshire seats are rural and solid Tory with huge majorities. Bedford is Labour, held by a Blair loyalist, but we have not started to organise in Bedford yet. Of the two remaining, both in Luton, one is held by a left wing, Old Labour Trade Unionist who has defied the Whip on at least three occasions. The other, Luton South, is held by a careerist devotee of the Blair project. Our choice was made. We would stand in Luton South. By standing against Labour in elections we will be accused of splitting the left of centre vote and possibly even allowing the Tories to win. Guilty as charged. We can see very little difference between the present Labour Party and the Tories. We have written policies that any Labour politician should have no problem agreeing with. If they are prepared to stand on those policies they will face no opposition from us. When it came to choosing a candidate, I have been persuaded that my background and abilities and the fact that I have lived in Luton South for nearly 30 years make me suitable. I am tremendously honoured to have been chosen. We are now working to be ready for the election and there is much to be done. We need to expand our membership in order to raise our

profile by delivering leaflets but more immediately, to provide us with a fighting fund to raise the deposit required to stand a candidate and to pay printing, postage, telephone, meeting and travelling expenses to name but a few. We cannot expect millions of pounds in donations from rich business people and our potential voters would rightly be suspicious if such donations were offered.

Which brings me to the long-term aims of the Socialist Alliance. We will not confine ourselves to contesting elections but will also campaign actively and constantly against social, industrial and environmental injustice. In Bedfordshire we are heavily involved with campaigns to prevent the closure of Vauxhall Motors, to prevent the privatisation of council housing, to stop a concentration camp for asylum seekers being built and to prevent the privatisation of our schools and hospitals through Private Finance Initiatives. We are an alliance of people from several existing groups, some revolutionary, some reformist by nature and it is inevitable that we will not always agree on aims and strategies but we are all agreed on the appalling performance

of the Labour Party and its betrayals of the working class. We aim to rectify the total absence of representation that exists for working people under the present regime. In order for us to be successful it is absolutely crucial that we turn the Trade Union movement away from its slavish adherence to the Labour Party. We can demonstrate that this link, usually deeply embedded in the Rules and Constitutions benefit no one but Tony Blair, full time Union leaders and the bosses. Many workers, I believe a majority, would welcome their branches being allowed to affiliate to or financially support an organisation that would offer them a say in its

policy making and which would represent them in Parliament and on Local Authorities. We must argue in our own workplaces and produce leaflets and bulletins aimed at reorienting Union members towards emancipating themselves and taking control first of their workplace conditions but also of wider political issues. We will not win anything and we will not deserve to win anything unless we can awaken in workers and stewards the appreciation that they are the Union, not the General Secretaries.

We have taken the first step. We exist. We do not exist just to fight elections, but only electoral activity presents our ideas in an immediate, active form to a broad public: vote for the Socialist Alliance candidate because you as workers should have your own politics and your own representatives. That is the purpose of running independent working-class socialist candidates – to raise publicly and actively the idea of workers' political representation and thus to give life and spark to the wider battle to turn round the labour Movement.

Now there is a choice.

**That is the purpose of running independent working-class socialist candidates – to raise publicly the idea of workers' political representation and thus to give life to the wider battle**



# 25 YEAR BADGES



Jake Anderson and Gerry Campbell of Dumfries and Galloway HQ receive their 25 year badges from Brigade Chair Neil Erskine



Joe Gabler receives his 25 year badge from Sale, Greater Manchester, Branch Chair Jack Grady



Nick Palmer-Hall receives his 25 year badge from London Region Executive Member Brendan French



Mick Donohue receives his 25 year badge from Sale, Greater Manchester, Branch Chair Jack Grady



Tony Sharpe receives his 25 year badge from Dartford, Kent, Branch Rep Steve Rogers



Malcolm Eastwood receives his 25 year badge from Hamworthy, Southern Region, Branch Chair Alan St Quintin



Ricky Liddell of Green Watch Helensburgh receives his 25 year badge from Branch Chair Gordon Sutherland



Dave Smith of Newark, Notts, receives his 25 year badge from Branch Delegate and Education Rep Richard Atkins



John Kelley receives his 25 year badge from Buckinghamshire Brigade Secretary Danny Whitelock



Peter Wise, Northants, receives his 25 year badge from Branch Chair Glen Marriott



Dick West, White Watch, Egham, Surrey, receives his 25 year badge from Rob Carter



John Higgs receives his 25 year badge from Dartford, Kent, Branch Rep Steve Rogers



Ian Mitchell of the Dumfries and Galloway Training Department receives his 25 year badge from Brigade Chair Neil Erskine



Paul Huggins, Carlton Station, Notts, receives his 25 year badge from Brigade Chair Rob Finch



Brian Pagan receives his 25 year badge from Dumfries and Galloway Brigade Secretary Ian Anderson